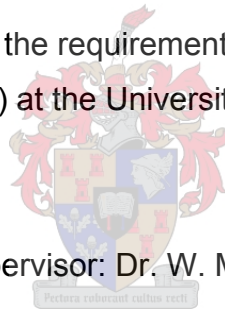


**‘The Man I Could Have Been’: Masculinity and Uncanny Doubles in
Selected Novels of Damon Galgut**

by

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Abstract

In this thesis I examine the portrayal of masculinity in selected works of Damon Galgut. Masculinities are read through the lens of the double and the uncanny as conceived by Freud and other scholars. The selected novels include *The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs* (1991), *The Quarry* (1995), *The Good Doctor* (2004), *The Impostor* (2008) and *In a Strange Room* (2010). In the introduction theoretical issues relating to masculinities, the double and the uncanny are discussed and a broad framework for the thesis is outlined. Subsequently each chapter discusses the representation of men and masculinities in the selected novels. Issues such as masculinity in the military, friendship amongst men, relationships with women, masculinity and apartheid, masculinity and whiteness and heterosexuality and homosexuality are discussed and explored through the lens of the double and the uncanny. Questions that emerge from this study are: What perspectives does Galgut offer of masculinities before and after apartheid? How do the men experience their political and social environment? How do the male characters in the novels interact with the female characters? What obligations do men and women have towards each other?

Opsomming

In hierdie tesis ondersoek ek die uitbeelding van manlikheid in geselekteerde werke van Damon Galgut. Manlikhede word gelees deur die lens van die dubbelganger en die *Unheimliche* soos deur Freud en ander teoretici gekonsipieer. Die geselekteerde romans sluit in *The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs* (1991), *The Quarry* (1995), *The Good Doctor* (2004), *The Impostor* (2008) en *In a Strange Room* (2010). In die inleiding word teoretiese kwessies met betrekking tot manlikhede, die dubbelganger en die *Unheimliche* bespreek en 'n breë raamwerk vir die tesis word uiteengesit. Daarna bespreek elke hoofstuk die voorstelling van mans en manlikhede in die geselekteerde romans. Kwessies soos manlikheid in die weermag, vriendskap tussen mans, verhoudings met vroue, manlikheid en apartheid, manlikheid en witheid, en heteroseksualiteit en homoseksualiteit word deur die lens van die dubbelganger en die *Unheimliche* bespreek en verken. Die volgende vrae word in die studie aangepak: Watter perspektiewe bied Galgut op manlikhede voor en ná apartheid? Hoe ondervind die mans hulle politieke en sosiale omgewing? Hoe gaan die manlike karakters in die romans met die vroulike karakters om? Watter verpligtinge het mans en vroue teenoor mekaar?

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Chapter 1: Introduction

With the publication of *The Good Doctor* in 2004 and its nomination for the Man Booker prize, Damon Galgut received widespread attention and the academic world also took a greater interest in his work. Galgut has been termed a “new South African writer” by the literary community as he is perceived as one of the emerging writers after apartheid. However, if one considers that Galgut has been a published writer since 1984, this term is misleading. To date Galgut has published 6 novels, of which three were published prior to the abolition of apartheid in 1994 and three thereafter. Galgut's early novels received some attention, especially *A Sinless Season* (1984), a youth book, whose success can in part be attributed to the fact that Galgut was only 19 at the date of its publication. While some academic articles have been published on *A Sinless Season* and *The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs* (1991), on the whole the scholarly world has been slow to respond.

In his work Galgut consistently foregrounds the outer and inner conflicts faced by men, and in particular white men, in South Africa. It is widely assumed that the collapse of apartheid has brought about a “crisis of masculinity” (Walker 163) for South African men. I argue however, that even though apartheid is seen as the “great era of masculinity”, Galgut, through his characters, exposes that masculinity has by no means been unproblematic or uncontested during apartheid.

Masculinities

Traditionally gender has been studied under the guise of feminism in the humanities as male domination was “assumed rather than examined” (R. Morrell, *Boys and Men* 606) and therefore demanded no further investigation. Recently this has changed as it has become apparent that the idea of a normative masculinity is questionable. John Beynon suggests that the interest in researching masculinity as a non-essentialist category is mainly due to an increased interest in gay and lesbian studies (15). Critics like Kathy Ferguson and Monique Wittig have furthermore pointed out that masculinity merits study as it shifts the gaze away from how the

margins are constructed to an investigation of how the centre constructs and maintains itself. This in turn is important as it draws attention to the fact that masculinity is fluid and constantly contested and restructured.

All critics in the field of masculinities studies agree that we cannot talk of masculinity, but that we have to talk about masculinities as they are “not fixed character types but configurations of practice generated in particular situations in a changing structure of relationships” (R. W. Connell in Morrell, *Of Boys and Men*, 607).

Connell explains that

[r]ather than attempting to define masculinity as an object (a natural character type, a behavioural average, a norm), we need to focus on the processes and relationships through which men and women conduct gendered lives.

'Masculinity' [...] is simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture. (33-34)

Similarly Berger et al. argue that

“[i]f 'maleness' is biological, then masculinity is cultural. Indeed, masculinity can never float free of culture: on the contrary, it is the child of culture, shaped and expressed differently at different times in different circumstances in different places by individuals and groups.” (1995 in Beynon 7)

Beynon refers to this as “masculinity-as-a-text” (7). Masculinity thus consists of a culturally accepted code of behaviours that are enacted. This effectively means that we cannot apply the term masculinity in a generalised manner to all communities as it is inherently unstable and changeable. In fact masculinity seems to be highly individual and almost defies any attempt at definition. Consequently we cannot speak of a South African masculinity or an African masculinity. We have to differentiate between multiple masculinities that exist in a certain context.

Arthur Brittan, however, argues that although masculinity may appear in different guises at different times and places, we cannot infer from this that masculinity is an “ephemeral quality which is sometimes present and sometimes not” (52). It is thus important to distinguish between three concepts that, according to Brittan, are frequently confused and used interchangeably under the term masculinity. Brittan therefore suggests that we distinguish masculinity from masculinism and patriarchy (53).

As mentioned before, masculinity is the cultural enactment of a code of behaviours which are subject to considerable change. Masculinism on the other hand is the ideology that ensures male domination and is as such the ideology of patriarchy. Thus masculinism and patriarchy are not subject to the same change and variation as masculinity and its various enactments. This means, that while concepts of masculinity will change and differ widely geographically, historically and culturally, the “justification and naturalisation of male power” remains constant (Brittan 53).

Nevertheless, Brittan continues to argue that it is absurd to believe that male domination is something common to all groups of men and that one overriding ideology is forced on women (and men) without exception (54). In fact we have to look at patriarchy as the result of the hegemony of a particular expression of masculinity which exercises power over the less accepted, marginalised expressions of masculinities and “that those who do not perform their masculinity in a culturally approved manner are liable to be ostracized, even punished (Beynon 11)”.

Morrell similarly argues that while it is not helpful to label men at an individual level as belonging to a particular type of masculinity; it is important to devise a conceptual framework that allows us to make sense of “the power aspect of masculinity” (Of Boys and men, 607). Hegemonic masculinity is therefore a useful concept that allows us to establish how cultural and political relationships form and maintain male dominance. Furthermore, Morrell points out that hegemonic masculinity is not only the result of oppressing women, but also a result of the subordination and silencing of other masculinities (Of Boys and Men, 608). The aim of hegemonic masculinity is to maintain a position of superiority vis à vis women and marginal masculinities. Allowing alternative masculinities would dilute the power of hegemonic masculinity

and thus hegemonic masculinity is maintained by a process of socialisation and fear. This fear is generally expressed as misogyny or homophobia (Michael Kaufmann).

The Double

Galgut depicts the duality and conflict his characters face often through a process of doubling. The protagonist therefore is faced with a mirror image of himself. In *In a Strange Room* the narrator explicitly refers to this sense of uncanny self recognition. Nevertheless, he also realises that this reflection is never an innocent replica of himself and that indeed there is always “some kind of groping for power” (Galgut, *Strange Room*, 41) involved. The narrator further muses that “[a]n image in a mirror is a reversal, the reflection and the original are joined but might cancel each other out.” (41) This seems to suggest that the double presents some kind of danger and is a dark and threatening force.

Sigmund Freud argues that “the 'double' was originally an insurance against the destruction of the ego, 'an energetic denial against the power of death'” (142). He maintains that this kind of double springs from “the primary narcissism” of the child's mind but that in adulthood, when this narcissism has been overcome, the double no longer has the aspect of insuring immortality but “becomes the uncanny harbinger of death.” (142)

Nevertheless, Freud also claims that in the double “[t]here are also all the possibilities which, had they been realized, might have shaped our destiny, and to which our imagination still clings, all the strivings of the ego that were frustrated by adverse circumstances, all the suppressed acts of volition that fostered the illusion of free will.” (143) And it is this notion of the double that is most prevalent in Galgut's novels. The protagonists all seem to encounter multiple versions of themselves in the men they meet, the men they could have become had they so chosen. This seems to suggest an identity crisis that is tied in with personal choices as well as political circumstances.

Milica Živković points out that the double is a well-established literary device “for articulating the experience of self-division” (121). He argues that

the double shows in graphic forms a tension between the “laws of human society” and the resistance of the unconscious mind to these laws. In this way the double changes the focus from intrapsychic psychology toward a view of the social structures. It points to the basis upon which cultural order rests tracing the unseen and the unsaid of culture: that which has been silenced by the symbolic, rational discourse. (121)

Galgut's characters exist in a multilingual, multicultural environment. Judith Oster argues that the “unitary self” is always an illusion and that any change, whether superficial or profound serves to destabilize our view of ourselves (61-62). She further argues that this is “magnified and multiplied when a person has moved into another culture and language, or exists (and therefore must constantly navigate) between two separate ones” (62). It is thus not surprising that the characters in Galgut's novels feel a sense of confusion as to where they belong and what their role in the “new” South Africa is. We can therefore see that the characters experience a fragmentation of the self on multiple levels such as gender, race and class and struggle to reconcile what they see with who or what they are, or believe they are. This fragmentation then manifests itself in the figure of the double.

Chapter 2 focuses on *The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs*. *The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs* is a transitional novel that depicts a very specific moment in history, the dismantling of apartheid in Namibia and South Africa. The novel is constructed through a number of interspersed narratives which offer us a compelling look at a several concerns such as apartheid's history, masculinity, queer sexuality and whiteness. The characters find themselves on the cusp of profound political and personal change and questions of identity and belonging take on a special urgency. Throughout the novel Patrick is confronted by different kinds of masculinity in the form of his father, brother, the commander, Lappies, Godfrey and Andrew Lovell. In this chapter I will explore how these different masculinities are represented and how Patrick tries to negotiate an identity for himself under the pressures from home and the military.

Chapter 3 discusses *The Quarry*. *The Quarry* is an unconventional narrative as it

does not offer the reader the security of realist narrative fiction. The novel abounds with images of the double, the carnivalesque and the absurd that can be seen as subversive to the official apartheid discourse. David Pattie explains that the conventions of carnival and the symbolic inversions that accompany it open up a space for dialogue that would otherwise not be possible (58). In her PhD thesis on the works of Damon Galgut, Sofia Kostelac argues that *The Quarry* “is not a creative embrace of the future, but an expression of antagonism towards the apartheid past and the restrictions it placed on the writer’s agency” (87). She thus categorises *The Quarry* as an experimental novel that defies the conventions of realist fiction so common in the apartheid novel. In this chapter I therefore argue that the carnivalesque and the double offer us an insight into the absurdity of life caused by apartheid.

In chapter 4 I discuss *The Good Doctor*. In this chapter I shall demonstrate how Galgut has made use of the figure of the double and the uncanny to explore notions of South African masculinity and whiteness as well as the apartheid past. As in *The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs* the characters in the novel find themselves at a particular historical moment in which the apartheid past is still very visible - in Frank’s words, “The past has only just happened. It’s not past yet.” (6) – and they have to make sense of their present situation while still dealing with the past. I therefore investigate how the male characters in the novel try to redefine their masculinity in the post-apartheid context. This will be achieved by looking at Frank’s relationship with his father, Laurence, Colonel Moller and Tehogo. Furthermore, I will investigate Frank’s relationship with women, as there seems to be a deep-seated ambivalence and anxiety about women in the novel. Not only are they portrayed as instruments for fulfilling men’s desires, but the female characters are also faceted in a way that reveals a sometimes disturbing view of women.

In chapter 5, on *The Impostor*, the ironically named Adam (the original man) has trouble placing himself in a society that has robbed him of any certainty regarding his status as a white man, as he is no longer assured of the power and privilege previously assigned to him by the virtue of his race and gender. He finds himself mirrored by Canning, who feels comfortable in his environment and who seems to

embody the new successful man. Adam finds himself curiously attracted to Canning, but refuses to acknowledge any allegiance to him. Canning is supposedly a childhood friend of Adam's, but Adam cannot remember him at all. This points to repression and disowning. Oster points out that

[t]he disowning common to doubles in literature is generally thought to be of something in the self that has been repressed or denied by the protagonist. The appearance of the "double" attests to the fact that whatever that "something" is, it will not permanently go away, it is very much alive; in the person of the double, it is usually menacing, sometimes fatal, and at the very least, extremely disturbing. (69)

Even the name "Canning" itself, so similar to the word "uncanny", reminds the reader of the fear and threat inherent in the double. This chapter therefore explores how Adam positions himself as a man in the new South Africa through an analysis of his relationships with the men and women he meets.

In chapter 6 I perform a close reading of the novel *In A Strange Room*. In this reading I explore the protagonist's relationships with strangers and friends. As Leon de Kock argues in his review of the novel, Galgut "analyses the axes of most human interaction as desire and power" (18). I thus look at how these axes of power and desire are constructed and maintained.

Chapter 2: “My other impossible self”: Doubles and Masculinity in *The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs*

Contemplating a picture of the assassinated anti-apartheid activist Andrew Lovell, Patrick, the protagonist of *The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs*, asks himself: “If he [Lovell] could have known it would end like this, so messily, so painfully, on a patch of dirty cement stained with petrol and footmarks, would he still have done it? Or might he have wished to be me?” (83) This sets Lovell up as a Patrick’s double or as his “other impossible self” (117) as Patrick refers to him. In his essay on “The Uncanny” (“Das Unheimliche”), Freud argues that in the figure of the double “there are all the unfulfilled but possible futures to which we still like to cling in phantasy, all the strivings of the ego which adverse external circumstances have crushed, and all our suppressed acts of volition”(143). What Patrick realizes at that moment, is that the outcome of his (and Lovell’s) life depends on a number of choices and circumstances and that it is these choices that in the end determine your identity and fate. Patrick has up to that moment in his life drifted along with the choices other people or circumstances have made for him. Thus he went to the army not because he was “patriotic” but because he was “obedient” (56). This shows that the apartheid system (at least partly) did not only depend on outright coercion to keep going, but mostly on the passivity and complacency of its subjects. (This is an idea that recurs later in *The Good Doctor*.) Patrick experiences a psychological breakdown after his only friend, Lappies, gets shot during a patrol. This irrevocably changes his outlook on life and pushes him to reconsider his position as a white man in South Africa at that time.

The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs is a novel that is set at a very particular moment of South African (and Namibian) history. It deals with the transitional time when Apartheid was first being dismantled. Most of the story is set during the week before the first free democratic elections in Namibia in 1989, which marks the beginning of the demise of Apartheid in South Africa too. *The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs* examines the life of Patrick, a former soldier who was discharged from the apartheid military after suffering a psychological breakdown due to the death of his friend, lover and fellow soldier Lappies. We follow Patrick as he journeys to Southwest Africa

(now Namibia) with his mother, Ellen, to visit her lover, Godfrey, and witness the first free and democratic elections in Southwest Africa (1989). The narrative is interspersed with childhood and family memories throughout, which offer us a compelling look at a number of concerns such as apartheid's history, masculinity, queer sexuality and whiteness. The characters therefore find themselves on the cusp of profound political and personal change and questions of identity and belonging take on a special urgency. Throughout the novel Patrick is confronted by different kinds of masculinity in the form of his father, brother, the commander, Lappies, Godfrey and Andrew Lovell. While the father and brother represent the patriarchal family, the commandant represents the very masculinist apartheid military and its patriarchal hierarchy. Lappies, in contrast, represents both gay desire as well as dissent for Patrick. Godfrey is on one level posited as the black 'other' to Patrick, but this relationship is complicated due to a double doubleness in which he also comes to represent a father figure to Patrick. Andrew Lovell on the other hand seems to represent liberal white politics and resistance to the apartheid regime. Patrick realises that under different circumstances he could have been like any of these men. In a way he thinks of these men as "[his] impossible other self" (56). Patrick thus recognises in the other men Freud's "unfulfilled but possible futures" that are represented by the double. The figure of the double in this novel therefore affords the reader insight into the complexity and fraughtness of white masculinity at the time of transition in South Africa. Galgut shows how fragile any sense of identity is at this time and how vulnerable white identity is at this particular historical moment.

Another important aspect of Patrick's identity is his relationship with his mother. As Sarah Nutall points out in her article on *The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs* "Patrick shares with his mother a sense of 'dislocation', yet will come to be more self-aware in his attempt to work out his political, national and sexual identities." (Flatness and Fantasy 221) In this chapter I will therefore explore Patrick's relationship with the men closest to him and how they shape his awakening political and sexual awareness. Furthermore I will look at his relationship with his mother, Ellen, and will show that while Galgut essentially represents Ellen as a drifting and fickle character, she nevertheless constitutes one of the more complex and sympathetic female characters in Galgut's oeuvre. While she prefigures women like Maria in *The Good*

Doctor and Baby in *The Impostor* she is less dangerous and infused by a certain naïveté that is absent in the other women characters.

Frank J. Barrett, in an article on masculinity in the military, explains that masculine hegemony refers not only to different groupings of men and the ideals they uphold, but also to the processes by which these groups are formed and the institutionalised structures that inform and constrain them. Masculinity is therefore a performative act that constantly has to be reiterated and re-performed in order to maintain and perpetuate itself. Barrett argues that as human beings we “actively accomplish, or ‘do gender’” in the way we walk, dress, greet each other, etc. These behaviours occur within a larger social context in which certain patterns are ascribed to certain gender roles. Therefore, he argues, that “the relationship between individual practices and larger social structures is recursive” (78 -79). Furthermore, Barrett maintains that “masculinity achieves meaning within patterns of difference.” (82) This means, that if to be masculine is characterized by qualities such as “not quitting”, not showing emotions, and strength, then being feminine is characterized by weakness, overwrought emotionality and quitting. Thus women and gay men are positioned as ‘the other’ against which heterosexual men define themselves. In fact, Barrett argues that in the military there is a tradition by which the ‘other’ (i.e. the enemy or dissidents) is associated with femininity by the labels assigned to them (82). This idea of the performativity of gender also reflects Judith Butler’s argument that gender is a ritual performance, a “regularized constrained repetition of norms” and “a ritualized production, a ritual reiteration under and through constraint ... with the threat of ostracism” (Bodies 95). Thus a man who does not participate in the rituals and rites that actively construct masculinity risks being ostracised from the community that upholds these gender norms.

This idea of repeated rituals of masculinity find expression in *The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs* in the way Patrick’s father, brother and friends engage in sports, hunting and other activities that uphold their “brotherhood of men” (61) and by extension patriarchy. Patrick who is ill at ease in this “brotherhood of men”, desperately longs to feel part of this group, but at the same time fears it increasingly. At one point, when Malcolm tells him about vomiting out of the car window during his hunting trip with their father, Patrick confesses that he too “longed to vomit out of

windows, to earn the laughter of [his] father” (17). Furthermore Patrick confesses that it “was beyond me to participate in their rituals of kinship. I would never hunt animals in the bush, or stand around the fire with them [the other men] beer in hand, tugging at my moustache. I was pale, I was weak, my jokes made them blanch. I would never be part of their club” (63). In *The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs* Galgut thus depicts a white masculinity that is hypermasculine, marauding and aggressive. Jesse Arsenault suggests that this hypermasculinity is “a byproduct of two particular colonial apparatuses...: the military and the white patriarchal family.” (Brute Violence 6)

Hegemonic masculinity then is a “particular idealized image of masculinity in relation to which images of femininity and other masculinities are marginalized and subordinated” (Barrett 79). According to R. W. Connell the current hegemonic ideal of masculinity in Western culture is “a man who is independent, risk-taking, aggressive, heterosexual, and rational (in Barrett 79). In *The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs* Galgut shows that white men at the time were expected to be aggressive (towards women, animals and nature in general), heterosexual, unemotional and engaging in such manly pursuits as hunting, beer drinking and sports.

In her article on representations of rugby in recent South African literature, Anne Reef suggests that in Galgut’s novel the depiction of father and son “function[s] metonymically to portray the workings of patriarchy” (72). Thinking back to the definition of patriarchy given in the introduction of this thesis, those practices that ensure male domination, i.e. masculinism, form the ideology of patriarchy (53). It follows that patriarchy is informed by those relations between men that establish and create a feeling of interdependence and solidarity amongst them and thus ensures their continued superiority over women and other marginalised men. As Reef says, patriarchy “must be understood as the repository and the protector of masculine hegemony” (72). At the time of this story, white masculinity was coming increasingly under threat as liberation movements mean that power was slowly slipping out of an all white grasp. Thus maintaining a particular white masculinity, one that would guarantee a continuation of the apartheid world view, seems like an attempt to hold on to power and prestige through the domination of others (i.e. black people and women). Reef says that “[f]or patriarchy to endure physically, the sons must

reproduce, which necessitates heterosexuality. To maintain patriarchal ideology, the sons must think like the fathers, with paternal philosophy manifest in the son's actions. In order to procure a willing military force ... the sons must believe that they *want* to wage the wars of the fathers" (73).

As Michiel Heyns puts it, the father in *The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs* in his hypermasculinity is "almost purely a figure of rejection" (115). The bond between Patrick's brother, Malcolm, and their father becomes to Patrick a symbol for the whole world of white male camaraderie and solidarity that he is excluded from. While he rejects this world, Patrick also feels the pain of ostracism and he describes his continued exclusion from this as "relief and jealousy mixed together" (17).

Patriarchy in *The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs* can, however, not only be understood as a social construct. As Heyns argues, "Galgut insists on the connections between this form of male camaraderie and [the apartheid] system" (113). Reef further argues that Patrick's aversion to his father's hypermasculinity is therefore also a predictor to his aversion and ultimate rejection of the apartheid system (77). In her article on white masculinities in South Africa, Claire Kelly describes how patriarchal power and masculinity is intimately caught up with the colonial enterprise. It follows that the institutions that contribute towards forming obedient citizens, such as the school and the army, are instrumental in the construction of hegemonic masculinity. Kelly points out that the school acts as a precursor to the army, and especially the boarding school, where young boys are separated from their home, and importantly their mothers, in order to toughen them up. The school, according to Kelly, is structured hierarchically like the army as older boys are seen to have power over younger ones (119-120). Although we do not see Patrick in school we do see him interacting with his older brother. Patrick feels thoroughly alienated from his brother who excelled at sport and generally knows "how to be a man", which pleases his parents enormously. This alienation from other men continues for Patrick as he enters the army.

Patrick experiences the army as something that "was utterly at odds with [his] nature" (23). Nevertheless, while he cannot reconcile himself with the apartheid politics, the army breaks him on a different level, and his subsequent dissent is not

so much political as it is personal. Once in the army he notes: “now that I was actually *there*, my presence ceased to be a political act and turned into something else. It turned into an existential test, a contest of endurance between my soul and the material world around me. ... All of it to stage my downfall” (57-58). Patrick feels that he has “nothing in common” with the “laughing, jostling, testosterone-swollen animals” around him and that the “overpowering maleness of the place” is “suffocat[ing]” him (57). In fact he compares being in the army camp to “being with [his] father and his hunting friends in an isolated hunting lodge, deep in the swamps somewhere, for months and months and months” (57). Heyns argues that by connecting Patrick’s father and his behaviour to the army so seamlessly, Galgut sets up the military as a continuation of the male camaraderie and machismo represented by the father (113). He further asserts that both the father’s world and the military seem to “find[] [their] logical conclusion in killing” (113). This conflation of the military and civilian masculinity is particularly clear in the 1991 edition of *The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs* as Patrick describes his brother Malcolm: “[M]y brother embodied that land I’d grown up on: brutal and tall he helped people learn how to kill” (20).

In his article on masculinity in the US navy, Barrett says that “the image of masculinity that is perpetuated involves physical toughness, the endurance of hardships, aggressiveness, a rugged heterosexuality, unemotional logic, and a refusal to complain” (81). As Barrett points out though, these characteristics are not assumed to be permanent and inherent and the army therefore constantly has to set up “tests” and “routines” that give the men the opportunity to enact and practice these behaviours (Barrett 81). In this way the military “creates boundaries of inclusion around those who exhibit strength, endurance and competence” (Barrett 81). This can also clearly be seen in the way Commandant Shutte governs the army camp at which Patrick is stationed. In order to foster a sense of camaraderie and toughness amongst his soldiers, the commandant makes them play rugby.

Anne Reef, in her article “Try These: Tackling Representations of Rugby in Recent South African Novels”, says that “to merit full hegemonic power, a man must claim dominance through recognized success and/or leadership of other men and should try to be recognized for doing so” (73). She further argues that “sport offers unparalleled opportunities to exemplify these characteristics of ‘real’ maleness” (73).

In *The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs* Galgut uses the game of rugby, which has special significance in the South African context, as a metaphor to exemplify Patrick's inability to conform to the hegemonic masculinity of his father and his peers. In his essay "Four Notes on Rugby", J M Coetzee explains that the game of rugby is a strictly codified game that promotes values of "'fair play', 'may the best man win', 'team spirit' [and] 'never give in'" (122) as well as being a "celebration of speed, agility, strength [and] comradeship" (121). He further suggests that "[i]n its pyramidal structure (club, province, nation) it also formed a model of white political unity" (122). It follows that a man proficient at rugby would exhibit all the markers of hegemonic masculinity and thus conform to patriarchy. Thus, as Coetzee points out, sport, in its codified nature, becomes a locus of enormous parental and political power as he maintains that a "child who submits to the code [of the game] and plays the game is ... re-enacting a profoundly important moment of culture: the moment at which the Oedipal compromise is made, the moment at which the knee is bent to government" (125). What this means is that at the moment the child consents to playing rugby, a game whose rules were made by the fathers, the child consents to the values, cultural and ideological, inherent in the game.

This is blatantly obvious in the way that rugby is portrayed in *The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs*. Malcolm, Patrick's brother, is both proficient at "being a man" and at playing rugby and this leads to enormous pride and satisfaction in the father. Patrick on the other hand fears rugby as he lacks "that in [his] hands that help[s] [him] catch balls" (49). Unlike his brother, he is "pale" and "weak" (50). Thus, as Reef points out, the father's attempts to find any of the male attributes such as toughness, resilience and a fighting spirit in Patrick are futile. In fact, rugby becomes a symbol for all that Patrick fears – namely the hypermasculinity as embodied by his father and Malcolm. The rugby ball, "round, dark, a dangerous shape of leather" (11) becomes the "embodiment of all that was most frightening to [him], and all [he] could never do" (11-12).

The importance of the link between rugby, patriarchy and apartheid is further made clear when Galgut carries the metaphor over into the army camp where Patrick is stationed. Commandant Shutte believes that "sport makes men out of monkeys"

(68). Sport, and by extension rugby, is therefore seen as a civilizing force that maintains the dominant culture and ideology.

In Lappies, another young conscript in the camp, Patrick finds another man, who like him, is weak and gentle and has “an emptiness in [him]” that correspond[s] to something in [Patrick]” (67). Patrick recognizes that “[their] otherness made [them] a pair” (67). The fact that Lappies and Patrick are incompetent at rugby leads to their final exclusion from “the brotherhood of men” (62) as they are perceived to be lacking manliness.

Calling Patrick and Lappies “doos” and “moer”, both words in Afrikaans derogatively refer to the female reproductive organs and genitalia, upon their failure to perform in a game of rugby, sets them up as weak and “female”. Not being able to stand the rough test of rugby then makes Patrick and Lappies equal to women. By sending them to do guard duty while the other soldiers play rugby, Lappies and Patrick are excluded from the rituals of male bonding inherent in rugby. Furthermore, by physically placing them outside the enclosure of the military camp this marginalisation is made explicit. Patrick experiences this as both relief and humiliation as he says:

Our segregation confirmed what had always been sensed. The others kept their distance from us now. They treated us kindly, but also remotely; we weren't part of the team. We were apart. And there was a certain relief in having been discovered. The pretence wasn't necessary anymore, with all the toil and angst it entailed: the mask had dropped. There was a brotherhood of men, I now clearly saw, to which I would never belong. My father, my brother, the boys at school – they knew things I didn't know. There was something in their hands that helped them to catch balls in flight. More than that: it was beyond me to participate in their rituals of kinship. I would never hunt animals in the bush, or stand around a fire with them, beer in hand, tugging at my moustache. I was pale, I was weak, my jokes made them blanch. I would never be part of their club. (62)

As Heyns argues in his article on “A man’s world” it is against the background of this exclusion and humiliation that the sexual encounter between Patrick and Lappies takes place (114). Their act of mutual masturbation is thus not so much a sexual act as it is “an act of revenge, undertaken in pain: against men, who had made the world flat.” (76) As he climaxes, Patrick repeats the words “leave me” (76) in this way trying to void himself of the pain inflicted upon him by those “who’d colluded against [him]” (76), namely his father, his brother, Schutte. The sexual encounter is therefore, as Heyns argues, a “rebellion against the man’s world” (114). It follows that Galgut’s intention at this point in the novel is to object to a particular masculinity that is deeply enmeshed with the political system.

In his friendship with Lappies Patrick finds a connection to life in a world that otherwise seems to reject him. Therefore, when Lappies gets shot, Patrick loses his last hold and life in the camp becomes unbearable, precipitating his psychological breakdown. This is very clear when Patrick says: “...my presence ceased to be a political act and turned into something else. It turned into an existential test, a contest of endurance between my soul and the material world around me.” (57-58) From Patrick’s breakdown and subsequent discharge from the army it is clear that he has rejected apartheid and its hypermasculinity. At this point however, Arseneault argues in his Thesis on Galgut’s novels, Patrick still clings to “certain ideological apartheid” (Races Among Men 64). This is evident in the way he reacts to the news of Ellen’s new, black boyfriend Godfrey. Although Patrick professes that he isn’t “alarmed by his colour” (7) the very fact that he notices it and positions himself as white in relation to Godfrey shows that he is still caught up in thinking of Godfrey as ‘the other’. In his landmark study *Orientalism*, Edward Said says that otherness includes doubleness. This means that it is both identity *and* difference. Therefore every “other” is dialectically created and necessarily includes the values and meanings of the colonizing forces. At one point, when Patrick is driving through a township in Windhoek he notes: “We’d made them [black people] what they were, then despised them for what they weren’t. They were the negative print of our lives” (49). This seems to echo Said’s notion of the construction of the other in the sense that the photographic metaphor of the negative print here implies that there can only be a positive print once the negative is developed.

Arseneault argues that Patrick is still caught up in a situation where his “day-to-day life is structured around racially segregatory practice” (Races Among Men 64). When informed by his mother of her intended trip to Windhoek to meet up with Godfrey, Patrick is reluctant to go. He is not only bothered by the “small matter of his race” (43) but Godfrey is also “so far from ... [their] normal lives” (43). Patrick feels that this makes Godfrey “different and somehow powerful” (42). If we recall Butler’s argument that both gender and race are constructed around ritual performance (Undoing gender 41), we see that Godfrey acts as a strong disorienting force of these ritual performances. Godfrey is set up not only as Patrick’s double or other, but through his relationship with Ellen, he is also set up as the double of Patrick’s father. Arseneault therefore points out that Ellen’s “relationship [with Godfrey] ... allows Patrick to experience a type of disorientation from the continuity of the whiteness of his family”. (Races Among Men 64)

Once in Windhoek, Patrick’s anxiety around Godfrey continues as he is unsure of how to react to a man who is by virtue of his age a young man like him, but by virtue of his liaison with Ellen a father figure. This dual doubleness is well expressed when at one point Patrick remarks that “he was just a young man, not much older than me, who also, perhaps, felt a little shy and awkward in my company” (51), but some days later when confronted by the hotel manager about Godfrey’s relationship with his mother, he answers sarcastically “He is my *father*” (80). This shows that Patrick is conscious of the irony of his situation, being both companion and son to the same man.

Nevertheless, through his political activism, Godfrey lets Patrick experience an authority figure different to his father. While Godfrey still represents the same hypermasculine values as the father, Patrick realizes that these values do not necessarily have to lead to an acceptance of apartheid values.

Like Patrick’s father, Godfrey’s masculinity is marauding, in the sense that he is no less of a “beer drinking”, “meat eating” boor. He treats Ellen like a possession and it is hinted at that he is physically abusive towards Ellen. Patrick confronts Godfrey about his behaviour and Godfrey interprets this as a racial insult. Patrick makes it clear though that he is speaking to him as an individual, as a man. It is at this

moment that they overcome the racial tension that is between them and start to become friends. This happens, however at the cost of Ellen (a point discussed in more detail later in this chapter), as her relationship with Godfrey rapidly deteriorates afterwards.

It is through Godfrey that Patrick is introduced to political activism. Nuttall argues that “When Godfrey calls Patrick ‘comrade’ he is partly ‘in love’ with the image of solidarity and brotherhood it invokes, yet he senses how fragile it is.” (223) Patrick senses that this is a place where he could find the inclusion in a community that he has been unable to find with his father, brother and the men in the army camp. However, he also realizes that he would only be partially included as he is fighting another battle, one that concerns his sexual orientation. When Godfrey posits that he might stay in Namibia until South Africa is free, Patrick responds “There are other kinds of exile” (134). Heyns argues that “[d]istancing himself from what he regards as the man’s world, Patrick [...] has to disown also gay desire, which is after all centred on the male. His exile is as much from his own nature as from the man’s world” (117). I am not quite convinced though that Patrick is renouncing gay desire at this point. I feel that at this moment Patrick is choosing to fight his battle and by rejecting Godfrey’s offer he is not compromising on his quest to find his identity. A little later Patrick also tells his mother that he no longer wants to live with her, thus disassociating himself from her and her new white boyfriend (who uncannily resembles the father), an indication that he is disassociating himself from the white apartheid discourse and ideology that particular relationship represents. One senses that Patrick is on a quest to fulfil his own desires at this point rather than floating along with his mother as he did in the beginning of the novel.

The white freedom fighter Andrew Lovell is set up as a direct double of Patrick. Patrick sees in him “[n]ot a special, extraordinary face. A face not entirely unlike mine” (69). In this way Patrick realizes that indeed he could be like Lovell. Lovell, in the story, occupies a position that is seen as redeeming for a white man as he has taken it upon himself to fight the injustices inflicted on people by the apartheid regime. Lovell thus presents Patrick with an ethical position he could take up. This is something that becomes clear when Patrick thinks about what he would have liked to say to Lovell’s girlfriend at the funeral as he thinks: “[Lovell] who died was all that I’ll

never be. Though I strain and I beat, my efforts are muffled, my cries are eaten by silence. I have longed for a way to vent my country from me, to bawl it out of my head. Andrew Lovell was my other impossible self.” (117)

Patrick realizes, however, that it is impossible to take up this position, as while it would redeem him politically, his individual freedom would only be half accomplished. Despite his political dissent, Lovell operates in a world that is nevertheless strongly marked by masculinism. Lovell is represented as heterosexual, as he has a girlfriend, and by aligning him with Godfrey, the reader is led to infer that he is not rejecting masculinism and its values. Thus Patrick feels that it is “as if there were two selves at war in [him]” (124). On the one hand he cannot help admiring Lovell, and aspiring to his activism, but on the other hand he knows that he cannot endorse the kind of masculinity that he represents. Thus Lovell remains Patrick’s “other *impossible* self” (117).

Patrick has a very close relationship with his mother Ellen. She is in many ways set up as the opposite pole to his father and for Patrick she represents in many ways his only community in life. However, after his discharge from the hospital Patrick comes to question his mother more and more and in the end he also rejects her.

Ellen is a woman who has undergone “three very different incarnations in her life” (19). Growing up on a farm as an Afrikaans girl, her origins are rural. Once married to Patrick’s father though she completely rejects these rural origins and becomes “a composed, vacant, bloodless face” (9) devoid of any emotions or agency. She seems to be “eddy in a beautiful vacuum” (20), almost like a doll she is an instrument in her husband’s life, a decoration, almost like the expensive paintings in Patrick’s father’s collection. Patrick repeatedly describes her as cool and pale and devoid of passion as “[h]er moods were as level and blank as her face ... her face was always passive” (9) which highlight the idea of an inanimate object. After Malcolm’s death she divorces Patrick’s father and tries to rediscover her connections to the land and perhaps to life. Nevertheless she is portrayed as being in the grips of an identity crisis and Patrick bitterly comments that “the future was defined purely by how enthusiastically she could give herself to everything she had never done before” (21). It would therefore seem that Ellen’s attempts to find purpose in her life are incidental and chaotic, rooted in nothing.

Sarah Nuttall argues that “for [Ellen] a relationship with Africa invokes a crisis of identity, and leads to a tale of liberal agonistics. She seeks, but fails, to belong to the African land” (221). Patrick remarks that his mother’s professions about how “rooted” she feels to the continent and how much she belongs “sound[] more plaintive than proud” (43). Nuttall further says that if at first it seems as if Godfrey can offer Ellen a sense of “home” by “bestow[ing] his ‘redeeming desire’” on her, it becomes clear very quickly that Godfrey can give her as little sense of home and belonging as Patrick’s father could (223). Thus “existing on the margins of male action, she becomes increasingly incidental in Godfrey’s life” (Nuttall 223). Patrick sees how Ellen’s relationship disintegrates and remarks: “And as with all her previous relationships, she was looking for something beyond Godfrey, some idea that he represented.” (43) To Patrick it is thus clear that Ellen’s activism, like her relationships, are merely an attempt to find a sense of belonging in a world that has never allowed her to exist as an individual. It is in fact a world that constantly puts her in a marginalized position vis à vis men.

In fact, Arseneault argues that women in Galgut’s novels are consistently portrayed as objects through which male bonding and solidarity is achieved. Patrick finds in Godfrey a way to connect with a world that rejects the apartheid system that has caused him so much pain, but this is achieved at the cost of Ellen. When Godfrey insists on continuing with his political activities while they are in Swakopmund Ellen complains to him that “[t]his wasn’t what I came up here for. I came to be in Windhoek, to see you. This stuff with posters, that wasn’t part of the plan” (86). Godfrey replies that she has a choice to either come with him or to “do what [she] want[s]” (86). While on the surface it would seem that Ellen is simply being selfish and difficult, this scene illustrates her conflict. If she does not submit to what men want her to, she becomes excluded from their lives. She is not taken seriously by them. Curiously, although Patrick himself knows what it is like to be excluded, constantly on the margins, he has no compassion for Ellen. In fact in the end he comes to see her as “a distorted white woman, lost on her way. She was part of nothing at all” (158)

The fact that Ellen takes up with the white, very masculine and domineering Dirk Blaauw, suggests that she has come full circle and that she finds herself back with a man who is almost exactly like Patrick's father is. It would seem therefore that Galgut does not allow his female characters to develop an awareness of their position and they remain caught up in dependency on men. This is a recurring theme and will be explored further in the chapters on *The Good Doctor* and *The Impostor*.

As my discussion of *The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs* shows, Galgut has created in Patrick a character in search of identity and belonging in a world that rejects him first and foremost on the grounds of his sexual orientation or as Patrick says himself "his nature". Unwilling, and indeed unable, to engage in the ritual performances of hegemonic masculinity he finds himself at breaking point. Through his breakdown Patrick disassociates himself both from the hypermasculinity of his father and the world he represents as well as from apartheid ideology, which is deeply enmeshed with masculinism.

It is his mother's relationship with Godfrey, the Namibian, black freedom fighter, that allows Patrick to resolve his anxieties and tensions caused by apartheid indoctrination around the racial "other". But it is in the political activist Andrew Lovell that he comes to see his "other impossible self" (117). Lovell represents a redeeming white masculinity that would allow Patrick an ethical position that aims to dismantle apartheid injustice. This is, however, a position that remains "impossible" for Patrick as he first has to gain individual freedom through the free expression of his sexual orientation before he would be able to take up the battle for others. Because Lovell's world still adheres to values of masculinism, as represented by Godfrey, he cannot accept a position that would allow him political freedom at the cost of his sexuality. It would therefore seem that while Galgut's novel is a novel of political dissent, it is also a novel that makes (despite Galgut's claims that this was not his intention) a plea for the freedom and acceptance of gay masculinity.

Women, however, it seems remain victims of male oppression as Galgut does not allow his female characters insight into and agency for their own positions. This is seen in the way that Ellen is constantly represented as fickle, naïve and empty. This

is a trend that continues in Galgut's other novels. Women are therefore not allowed to form part of a redeeming femininity in the new South Africa.

Chapter 3: “An absence in the surface of the world”: Identity, Absurdity and the Apartheid Past

“[The quarry] was dug a long time ago and it goes down deep into the ground. There might be water in the quarry, or movement, or nothing. There might be no bottom to it.” (175 – 176) These are the chilling last lines of Damon Galgut’s third novel, *The Quarry*. *The Quarry* has not received much critical acclaim and critics like Greg Bottoms call it “a ten year old formal experiment and morality tale, which is of a different, lesser order altogether [than Galgut’s later work]” (41). Both Aida Edemariam and J U Jacobs maintain in their reviews of the novel that the story is full of empty and unexplained portent that never comes to a satisfactory conclusion. While it is true that the story seems to function on the level of symbols and archetypal figures rather than individual characters, I believe that it is not simply a morality tale and unsuccessful experiment. The story abounds with elements of the carnivalesque and the absurd that can be seen as subversive to the official apartheid discourse and give the symbols, that Jacobs seems to object to and calls portentous, a much more meaningful shape. David Pattie explains that the conventions of carnival and the symbolic inversions that accompany it open up a space for dialogue that would otherwise not be possible (58). In her PhD thesis on the works of Damon Galgut, Sofia Kostelac argues that *The Quarry* “is not a creative embrace of the future, but an expression of antagonism towards the apartheid past and the restrictions it placed on the writer’s agency” (87). She thus categorises *The Quarry* as an experimental novel that defies the conventions of realist fiction so common in the apartheid novel. As Galgut explained in an interview with Andie Miller about *The Good Doctor*, writing during apartheid followed fairly clear rules that were based on “acceptable clichés, in which everyone had a recognizable role, and the morality was very set, very clear” (142) and “you were either with the system or against the system” (142). By using conventions of the carnivalesque, Galgut questions any clear morality and rather points to an existence that has become absurd. It therefore also becomes clear that the constant refusal to give symbols their “rightful” meaning is deliberate and reflects Galgut’s disillusionment and feelings of alienation.

The action in the novel turns around an abandoned quarry, which seems to be an extended metaphor for the state of South Africa at or shortly after the fall of apartheid. Ironically the time shortly after apartheid was characterized by euphoria and hope as people were looking forward to a more just and prosperous society. Galgut's novel, with its mood of negativity and decay, thus stands in stark contrast to this euphoria. As a symbol, the quarry is both a place from which things can be dug up, unearthed, as well as a place where things can be hidden or dumped. So while on the one hand the quarry holds the promise of unearthing riches, new hope and prosperity, on the other hand it is also a place of secrecy and hiding. Furthermore, while the quarry serves as a hiding place for the murdered body of the minister, it cannot hide the stench of decay. The quarry is thus revealed as a metaphor for spiritual and moral emptiness and decay. One reviewer from Grove Press also comments that with *The Quarry* Galgut "gives us a devastating combat for man's most prized attribute: freedom" (groveatlantic.com). One has to wonder though at what price this freedom is attained. Thus the questions of guilt, redemption and injustice are raised. Considering the historical moment the novel addresses, one cannot help but feel that Galgut is saying that the freedom of the country has been gained at the price of many secrets and sins that have to be brought to light, as would be evidenced by the hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee established in 1995.

The Quarry was first published in 1995 and according to one reviewer, Greg Bottoms, constitutes a "formal experiment" (41) in narrative fiction. The prose is extremely constrained and the language more cinematic than narrative. While much attention is given to guiding the reader's gaze, less attention is given to characterization and narration. It follows that the reader has to "fill in the blanks" of the missing, more conventional, narrative elements and thus becomes as much participant as spectator in the story. In fact, it seems as if this deliberate blankness of the characters invites the reader to fill in the missing pieces with his/her own desires, fears, obsessions, etc. The novel opens with a nameless man, only referred to as "he", walking along a deserted country road. From his furtive behaviour it soon becomes clear to the reader that this man is a fugitive of some sort. His identity is,

however, obscured by the jumble of different clothes he wears, stolen from various washing lines. Similarly, his body is described as “bizarrely quilted in areas of sunburn and whiteness, cleanness and dirt” (3). This immediately raises the concern of identity and how it is constructed. In fact the man is said to be “a harlequin” (3), setting him up as a figure that is not only defined by disguise and mockery but also by muteness (Oxford Dictionary). Thus right from the beginning the reader is warned not to take any notions of identity at face value as the very nature of identity is seen to be subverted by disguise and falsehood. In fact the reader is never told about the fugitive’s past or the reason why he finds himself on the road, thus the reader has to construct the fugitive’s identity from what is presented to him/her. As we will see later in this chapter, this blankness of the character/s is deliberate on Galgut’s part, as he seems to want to challenge the reader to fill in the picture of what it means to be South African at that specific time. This becomes even clearer when the fugitive happens upon another man, who is said to be a “figure like him” (3). However, on close inspection the other man is revealed to be “very tall” and “black” (4) as opposed to the fugitive’s “sunburn” (2) and “whiteness” (3). Although the two men are like each other, they are unable to communicate as they do not understand each other’s language and no connection can be established. They thus remain mute to each other. Even though both men are driven by the need to survive and find themselves in more or less the same life situation, they are unable to form a connection. Real communication thus seems to be impossible as the men are separated by a rift that not even their common humanity can bridge. Difference therefore seems to be unbridgeable. If we read *The Quarry* as a metaphor for the state of the South African conscious at that specific time in history, it seems that Galgut is suggesting that all South Africans are in a way fugitives, trying to escape their past and take on a new identity to make a new start. However, it is still a society that is marked by difference. While South Africa is newly united and people have equal rights, the injustices of the past cannot simply be erased. Barriers that have been built up over decades do not simply disappear.

Shortly after his encounter with the black man the fugitive accepts a ride from a passing minister who also pays for the man’s breakfast and allows him to use his toiletries to freshen up in the restaurant bathroom. (The minister might be read as a

metaphor for the complicity of the church during apartheid and this will be discussed later on in this chapter.) As the two men consequently move on together, it becomes clear that the minister's motives were not exactly selfless. The two men stop at an abandoned quarry and get drunk. When the minister makes sexual advances towards the man, the fugitive kills him. After burying the minister's corpse in the quarry, the fugitive decides to take on the minister's identity and moves on to the town where the minister was to take up a new position. In this way the fugitive literally and figuratively becomes the minister's double. The symbolic value of the figure of minister is therefore obscured and complicated as he is both a fugitive and a respected member of society at the same time. Appearance as a marker of identity is therefore questioned.

At the town the fugitive gives a coloured man, Valentine, a ride in exchange for directions to the church. Too tired to do anything else, the fugitive ignores the landlady's warning that he take his belongings out of the car in order not to fall victim to theft, and goes to sleep. The next day, he discovers that his car has been burgled and all his belongings taken. This sparks off a police hunt for the perpetrators, who are later identified as Valentine and his brother Small.

When the real minister's body is discovered later that day in the quarry, suspicion again falls onto Valentine and Small. Captain Mong, in charge of the investigation, however, realizes that the fugitive is the real murderer, something that has escaped everybody else, and an intense manhunt ensues. It is this pursuit that forms the core of the novel and sets up the fugitive and Mong as opposites as well as doubles as they are described as "[o]ne man pursuing another man through the brown land. They were not people anymore, they were a principle in operation: law and outlaw, hunter and quarry." (123) As the hunt drags on it becomes more and more absurd, but both men are compelled to continue. In the end the hunt takes on a life of its own and becomes a purpose in itself. It is no longer about law or justice, but rather an existential quest for purpose and self-definition.

Throughout the novel, actions are not necessarily sparked by emotions, but rather seem to be mechanical and repetitive. In fact, right in the beginning of the novel, the fugitive's actions are described as "perfunctory and detached so that all activity was one. Crying or washing, it was the same to him" (3). This absence of purpose and meaning seems to point to a life that has become utterly absurd. This absurdity is echoed by the bleak landscape and the emptiness experienced by all the characters. Even the quarry, which in a way is the central metaphor of the novel, is described as an absence, a hole that perhaps has "no bottom" (179) at all.

In an interview with Christopher Roper for *The Southern African Review of Books*, Galgut explains that for him it was important to represent South Africa in a way that captures the feeling of alienation and absurdity caused by apartheid. He explains that the South African author André Brink once suggested that the central symbol in literature for South Africa ought to be the Struggle. For Galgut, however, this is not representative of how many South Africans feel. Galgut maintains that the symbol of the fugitive is a much more apt symbol to capture the South African conscious as he says:

I think [the symbol of the fugitive is] a common denominator for any aspect of living in South Africa. More than anything, that is the figure you will see as a result of all the political processes and ideologies (Roper *Writers at Work* 28).

He goes on to say that in *The Quarry*

[w]hat you're seeing is a world of action and event, without real motives ... the experience of living in that world, the quarry, which is a fraction of the South African reality, reduces you to that motiveless world. At the end of *The Quarry*, when Valentine, Captain Mong and the fugitive are all running, they are called 'he', there is no differentiation. In a world described purely in terms of action, no names or personalities, there is nothing to differentiate them. It's here in South Africa, where you see people at opposite ends of the political spectrum apparently doing the same thing without motives, in the world of action they are doing the same thing. (Roper *Writers at Work* 28)

What Galgut thus seems to suggest is that at this particular time in South African history, people are looking for meaning in action, but their actions are no longer defined by any clear motives, they have therefore become absurd.

It would therefore seem that the characters in *The Quarry* exist in a world that has robbed them of a ready made identity. Throughout the novel we see the various characters trying on the minister's cassock, which for a short while seems to lend them power and purpose. Whereas the fugitive in the beginning is described as "a harlequin", which is essentially a comic figure, when he wears the cassock he is no longer "laughable. He was haggard and mad and remarkable" (30). The cassock thus lends him a certain sense of importance and recognisability. Importantly, the power that the cassock lends him is a power that is later confirmed in the gaze of the public. Interestingly, the first time the fugitive is referred to as "the minister" is when he meets Captain Mong for the second time. They first met in the bathroom of the restaurant and although they acknowledged each other, their meeting did not seem remarkable. During their second meeting Captain Mong is wearing his uniform and is described as "somehow transformed by it so that he was not immediately familiar" (42). The uniform and the cassock are thus seen as symbols of public power and wearing them therefore also gives power. Identity is thus bestowed from the outside, it is fabricated rather than inherent.

Both the church and the police are seen as very masculine institutions. It would therefore seem that the hope for a meaningful male identity is placed in these institutions. However, in the course of the novel, both these institutions become laughable as Galgut deliberately introduces elements of the carnivalesque in order to subvert the official discourse surrounding these institutions.

Michail Bakhtin, in his groundbreaking study *Rabelais and his World*, describes the carnivalesque as both a historical as well as a literary phenomenon. Historically Bakhtin is interested in the great carnivals of Medieval Europe. For him these represented occasions when the ideological, political and legal authority of the great institutions of the state and the church were inverted (and indeed subverted) by the liberating force of the carnival. Bakhtin explains that the traditional fetes of carnival were not only liberating because during this time the state and church had very little or no control over the revellers, but more so because carnival proved that the laws of

the state and church were not immune to mockery, ridicule and reinvention. It is exactly the reinvention or rather reconception of these laws and rules that opens the door for new ideas to enter into the public discourse.

Bakhtin recognized that the spirit of carnival eventually dwindled and almost disappeared from the tradition of Europe with the advent of feudalism and capitalism. As Bakhtin explains in *Rabelais and his World*, the spirit of carnival metamorphosed into the carnivalesque and became a literary form rather than a popular event. For Bakhtin the traditions of the carnival were no longer something that was performed by the people themselves; rather it was to be found in literature as exemplified by the work of François Rabelais in his *Gargantua and Pantagruel*.

In his article “Feeding Power: Pinter, Bakhtin, and Inverted Carnival”, David Pattie explains that for Bakhtin the various practices of carnival, such as for example mock crownings and dethronings, all share a common dynamic as they all invert the common social hierarchies and disrupt established power structures as “those who normally rule are dethroned, and those who are ruled are given power” (58). Obviously this inversion only lasted for the duration of the carnival and power was never real or permanent. Bakhtin however argues that the convention of carnival and the symbolic inversions that accompany it opens up a space for dialogue that would otherwise not be possible (Pattie 58). In his book on Bakhtinian Thought, Simon Dentith explains that “it is possible to go further than this, and talk of carnivalized writing, that is, writing which has taken the carnival spirit into itself and thus reproduces within its own structures and by its own practice, the characteristic inversions, parodies and discrownings of carnival proper” (65). The carnivalesque thus becomes a powerful tool in writing by which hegemonic discourse can be subverted. The carnivalesque opens up the possibility for an alternative discourse which leads to the possibility of dialogue and change.

Pechey (in Smith) maintains that “[a]ny Bakhtinian looking for a clear case of monologism would none the less seem to have found in apartheid an unassailable empirical instance: here after all is a stridently racist discourse inimical to any dialogism” (Smith 41). Having been published in 1995, only one year after apartheid

was abolished in South Africa, *The Quarry* probably still deals with a South Africa strongly influenced by the discourse of apartheid. It thus follows that the carnival in this novel serves the purpose of disrupting the official apartheid discourse. Although the novel makes very little reference to any government or racist discourse, there are two instances in the novel that none the less prove telling. At one point, on learning that his brother has been imprisoned, Small asks his interlocutor whether “the boere” (73) have caught his brother. This seems to suggest that the police are still linked to the predominantly Afrikaans apartheid government. Another similar example can be found in a conversation between the false minister and captain Mong. Mong tells the minister that he is surprised that the church has not sent a coloured man to act as minister in the township church. When the minister comments that this hardly matters, Mong insists that they are “white” (91) thus betraying his racist orientation. I therefore argue in this chapter that Galgut uses the carnivalesque to question and subvert the official discourse and open up a space for dialogue and renewal.

Smith maintains that “through the dialogic of the carnival novel, literary transgression can produce cultural transformation” (42). She explains that although the dominant, hegemonic discourse may prevent and marginalize any dialogue in real life between the classes, “within carnival literature participation in dialogism is always possible through the heteroglossia of the Novel” (Willis in Smith 42). This means that through the carnivalesque the novel, which is free from the constraints of ideology and oppression of real life, can enter into a dialogue that can prove revolutionary and subversive. As Smith puts it, carnival offers a view of the official world as seen from the margins and thus results in the “unofficial or alternative practice of heteroglossia, which become antiofficial and potentially oppositional” (Pechey in Smith 42). Carnival therefore is seen to affirm marginalized voices and “restores a dialogical relationship between ideological systems” (Smith 42).

The idea of dialogue is again taken up when Galgut addresses the idea of the function of the church in the little township through the sermons of the fake minister. Again this is a moment when the official discourse is subverted as the minister does not adhere to the usual and accepted sermon.

The church was instrumental in implementing and maintaining apartheid (Hermann Gilomee 461-463). In a 1967 article on apartheid and the Dutch Reformed Church, Susan Rennie Ritner writes

Indeed, the DRC's [Dutch Reformed Church] influence has been exerted ... to the more and more precise refinement of an ideology of apartheid, and to exercising pressure on successive governments to accept this ideology as the basis of race policy. It was the Church that did not rest content with the traditional *baasskap* principles on which South Africa had been run since 1652 - the simple pragmatic acceptance of the superiority of the white man to the 'natives' he dwelt among. It is the Church that has insisted upon progressively sterner definitions of 'separateness', ending up with the present government's elaborate programme - still in the theoretical stage - of the total physical segregation of the races. (17)

Thus during apartheid the dominant church, the Dutch Reformed Church, proclaimed that apartheid was sanctioned by scripture and God (Gilomee 463). Furthermore in the 1960's church leaders such as A. B. du Preez, A. P. Treurnicht and Koot Vorster also began to justify apartheid and segregation of the South African peoples outside of the church as an almost divine right (J. W. Hofmeyr 448).

In the character of the minister The Quarry seems to comment on this complicity of the church with apartheid. The fake minister draws large crowds to his sermon as he is seen to abandon the usual sermon. Instead the minister tells his coloured audience "that the world [is] a prison, that they [are] all prisoners in it. He [tells] them that they [can] escape the prison of the world and that there [is] freedom beyond it" (58). This is of course highly ironic as the minister himself is in reality a fugitive. The very question of freedom is thus turned on its head and it thus becomes clear to the reader that the freedom the minister is alluding to is a freedom that goes beyond the physical. In order to be free the people have to rid themselves of the ideological shackles offered by the church and state.

This becomes even more evident through the arrival of the circus, which coincides with the trial of Small and Valentine for the murder of the real minister. The proximity

of the circus to the trial gives the trial a farcical character. In fact, Galgut cleverly conflates images of the circus with those of justice resulting in a carnivalesque representation of the court proceedings. He writes for example “In the afternoon the proceedings resumed and shortly afterwards the circus. Once again these separate discords were mingled in the room” (113). And it is not only the sounds of the circus that invade and disrupt the trial; the audience itself treats the trial like a circus spectacle. People are thus seen torn between attending the trial or the circus, as if the two of them are competing on the same level for their attentions. Small and Valentine’s state appointed attorney is described as “standing there with a striped suit on and a briefcase and with his pale face and his out-turned feet ... himself not unlike a clown” (105). Faced with this ridiculous image the reader is thus led to question ideas of justice and law.

In one sense the carnivalesque in *The Quarry* can therefore be seen as regenerative as hegemonic discourses are questioned and overturned. For Bakhtin the carnivalesque is positive as he sees laughter as the ultimate regenerative force. Some critics however argue that Bakhtin overvalues the positive aspects of the carnival and overlooks the negative aspects of violence that often go hand in hand with it (Dentith 73 – 75). Similarly Hutcheon argues that contemporary carnival literature “appears to represent ... our increased alienation” and that Bakhtin’s “positive evaluation of incompleteness often becomes negativized today and these change into anarchy and confusion” (85 -86). Thus the court proceedings in *The Quarry* end in chaos and confusion as the building burns down and the manhunt ensues. Furthermore, the confession of the fake minister that he is responsible for the murder of the real minister goes ignored and no justice is done. The contemporary carnival novel thus both in its form and its content reflects “feelings of insecurity in the face of both nature and the social order” (Hutcheon 85). Hutcheon further argues that instead of images of fecundity and rebirth as extolled by Bakhtin “images of physical sterility tend to dominate today; miscarriages, abortions, onanism, homosexuality” (88 – 89) and instead of being life-giving and vital sex is seen to be mechanical, unsatisfactory and sterile (90).

This is quite evident in *The Quarry* as the sexual advances of the minister towards the fugitive lead to murder and Mong's relationship with the woman is neither pleasurable nor vital. Mong's naked body after sex is said to be "fatter and looser than ... when he was clothed" (52) indicating its ugliness and possible ageing. Once Mong becomes obsessed with chasing the fugitive, which in itself becomes a strange example of homosocial bonding, he knows that he "wouldn't ever touch [the woman] again" (125). Thus the relationship between the two men, Mong and the fugitive, displaces the heterosexual relationship between Mong and the woman.

In fact the relationship between Mong and the fugitive becomes all consuming leading to a purposeless hunt across the bleak landscape. Galgut writes

He was no longer sure that there was a difference between them or that they were separate from each other and they moved on together across the surface of the world and the sun went down and it got dark and still they continued in duet. (134)

In the end Mong shoots the fugitive, but in an ironic twist, he becomes like the fugitive as he is described walking down the road "his sole destination was motion" (173).

The Quarry presents us with a book that is uncomfortable to read as it does not offer the reader the usual conventions and securities of realist narrative fiction. Characters are not clearly delineated and there is a deliberate blankness to the narrative that denies the reader a clear message. However, through images of the carnivalesque Galgut has created an opening for the reader to question not only the established conventions of writing but also invites the reader to question readily received ideas about identity and meaning.

Chapter 4: “The enemy within”: Intersections of Masculinity, Whiteness and Apartheid Legacy in *The Good Doctor*

Towards the end of *The Good Doctor*, Frank, the protagonist of the novel, contemplates his sleeping colleague, Laurence, and fantasises about murdering him. His murderous thoughts arise from the realisation that Laurence “was the enemy. ... The enemy was not outside, at large, in the world; he was within the gates.” (161) Nevertheless Frank “[turns] away from it and from [himself]” (161). It is significant that Frank does not only turn away from the idea/act of murder but more importantly from *himself*. It is thus clear that Frank does not only turn away from what he regards as his physical enemy but also from the enemy that seems to reside in his own mind as represented by Laurence. In his essay on “The Uncanny” Freud relates several anecdotes concerning the double and comes to “the disturbing discovery that the outsider is always already within, that the uncanny ‘stranger’ or ‘intruder’ is the self” (Lydenberg 1080). Oster also maintains that in literature the appearance of the double is symptomatic of something in the self of the protagonist that is disowned and repressed, which is then externalised in the figure of the double (69). Consequently one can argue that this scene makes use of classic doppelgänger literature conventions.

In this chapter I shall demonstrate how Galgut has made use of the figure of the double and the uncanny to explore notions of South African masculinity and whiteness as well as the apartheid past. The characters in the novel find themselves at a particular historical moment in which the apartheid past is still very visible - in Frank’s words, “The past has only just happened. It’s not past yet.” (6) – and they have to make sense of their present situation while still dealing with the past. As Walker explains, “men are perceived to be in trouble collectively” (161-162), because of the massive shifts, not only in racial terms but also in gender terms, that the end of apartheid has brought about which is said to have precipitated a crisis of masculinity. She further suggests that “[b]eing a man in post-apartheid South Africa is of necessity different [to being a man in apartheid South Africa], yet the present does not represent a complete rupture with the past” (163). I therefore investigate how the male characters in the novel try to redefine their masculinity in the post-apartheid

context. This will be achieved by looking at Frank's relationship with his father, Laurence, Colonel Moller and Tehogo. Furthermore, I will investigate Frank's relationship with women as there seems to be a deep seated ambivalence and anxiety about women in the novel. Not only are they portrayed as instruments for fulfilling men's desires, but the female characters are also faceted in a way that reveals a sometimes disturbing view of women.

The Good Doctor was published in 2003 and enjoyed immediate success, especially after its nominations for the Man Booker Prize 2003 and The Commonwealth writers Prize 2004. In an interview with Andie Miller, Galgut says that with *The Good Doctor* he wanted to write a "new South African book" (142) that expresses what it means to be a South African in present times. Galgut points out that South African literature during apartheid was based on "acceptable clichés, in which everyone had a recognizable role, and the morality was very set, very clear" (142) and "you were either with the system or against the system" (142). In order to break out of the mould of apartheid resistance literature Galgut says the "old moral signposts [have to be] shattered" (141-142) as South Africa has moved into an era in which morality is no longer clear cut. For him the characters of post-apartheid South Africa occupy an ambivalent position as previously accepted subject positions become questionable.

Ken Barris claims that *The Good Doctor* "fails in its attempt to position itself as a post-apartheid text" (24) because "[w]hile it is clearly set in post-apartheid South Africa, it has much to do with the shadow cast by the apartheid years, and concordantly with certain conventions of apartheid-era literature" (25). For Barris *The Good Doctor* is an anachronistic text as he perceives Galgut to have written a novel in which "the present in its difference is appropriated (without noticeable resistance) by the past" and "writes *forward* the apartheid past into a present to which it cannot do justice in any other way" (34). Furthermore, Barris claims that to look to the past is belated and cannot do justice to "the brittle political and material conditions of post-apartheid South Africa" (39).

Yet Barris fails to see that Galgut's characters are not a mere revival of apartheid characters and that the novel is not merely an attempt to place his fiction within the established canon of South African apartheid literature with its "ingrained

oppositional stance” (Barris 39), but that the juxtaposition of old and new characters allows insight into the tensions and divisions that underlie contemporary South African society. Following Bakhtin’s theory that novels are always dialogic by nature, we see that Galgut’s characters have grown out of apartheid and are in constant dialogue with apartheid literature, but they are also characters that have grown out of the transition to post-apartheid with all its ambiguities. The double allows us an exploration of that continual dialogue between the voices of the past and the present. The use of the doppelgänger gives the novel an additional dialogic structure that allows different voices within the novel itself to emerge.

Claire Kelly, in her study on masculinity, whiteness and colonialism, points out that “whiteness conceived by the colonial master narrative is ‘absolutely centred, unitary, masculine’” (117). She further argues that “[w]ith the political illegitimation of the colonial narrative, as marked by the new dispensation in South Africa, came the illegitimation of the masculinity with which it was associated” (117). Oster similarly states that any change in life, whether superficial or profound, disrupts our view of ourselves and thus dispels the illusion of “the unitary self” (61). As I shall argue, the double in post-apartheid literature, formed in the crucible of profound political transition, functions as a device for showing this experience of self-division.

Frank Eloff, the protagonist of *The Good Doctor*, is a man who feels scarred by his past. He is on the brink of a divorce that has taken him seven years to accept and finalise; he has not been able to engage in any meaningful relationships with women since his separation from his wife; his job prospects are bad and his outlook on the future is bleak. His physical environment seems to reflect this as he works in a hospital in a former homeland that is still strongly marked by its past. The town itself “has not sprung up naturally for the normal human reasons” but instead “had been conceived and planned on paper, by evil bureaucrats in a city far away” (4). Frank consequently experiences the town as a “ghost town” (4) that has long outlived its purpose. In fact, like Frank, it is “a strange twilight place, halfway between nothing and somewhere” (34). The hospital itself is a “joke” (5) as it is merely a place with activity that serves no real purpose. Not only is there a lack of facilities and equipment, meaning that patients cannot really be treated there and are forced to go to the bigger hospital in the town nearby, but the hospital is also a cipher of the

apartheid regime and its plan of segregation. Frank points out that the local people “hate this place” as it is “where the army came from. It’s where their puppet dictator lived” (6). As such the hospital represents stasis as it has outlived its purpose and the political forces that kept it in place no longer exist.

Furthermore, the homeland setting and the dysfunctional hospital serve to create an uncanny atmosphere as the reader is confronted with a place that is expected to be “full of administration and movement” (3), but that is revealed to be an illusion or even parody of administration and movement. In “The Uncanny” Freud explains that the uncanny is a feeling that results from something being unfamiliar/unhomely but frightening because of its disturbing resemblance to something that is real/homely. Nayar explains that the uncanny is “about the human ‘sense’ of house and home” and that it “is a perception of a space where the perceiver finds herself simultaneously ‘at home’ and ‘not at home’” (89). Nayar further goes on to say that “[t]he uncanny is the name of this experience of double perception of any space which is at once familiar and strange, safe and threatening, “mine” and “not mine”” (89). This divide between the familiar and the strange and the safe and the threatening is taken up repeatedly in the novel and is reflected not only in the characters themselves, but in the environment too that seems unhomely “by virtue of being inhospitable” (Nayar 89).

The routine life with its “flat days” (42) at the hospital is interrupted by the arrival of Laurence Waters, a newly qualified doctor, who has come to absolve his year of mandatory community service at the hospital. Laurence is the complete opposite of Frank. He is young and idealistic and seems blissfully unaware of the troubled history of the hospital as well as of the country at large. For him politics do not matter and “the old history doesn’t count” and he is purely driven by the desire to “make a difference” (51). He represents youth, change, spontaneity and innocence. Van der Vlies suggests that the surname “Waters” connotes new life and change. But even more strikingly, the name Laurence has connotations of chivalry and nobility and is resonant with that of Florence Nightingale, who is best known for her dedication to the treatment of injured soldiers during the Crimean war. Laurence, too, believes he can make a difference to the lives of the poverty stricken villagers in the homeland. Laurence can be interpreted as Frank’s double, not in the sense of the evil double as

conceived by Freudian psychoanalysis, but in the sense of the double as being the other who “represent[s] *difference*” (Oster 71). As such Frank and Laurence represent two different versions of masculinity.

Laurence is presented as a young man full of ideals and ideas. While all the staff at the hospital are from a generation that has experienced apartheid and its aftermath, Laurence is the only one for whom apartheid is but a historical concept that means nothing. He therefore alienates the people around him as he transgresses all sorts of established boundaries and limits which he fails to acknowledge. This makes him unpopular with Frank and Dr Ngema, the two people who have most power to lose. Laurence exposes Frank and Dr Ngema’s shortcomings which results in the two senior doctors feeling shamed and threatened.

Frank, who originally came to the hospital to take over from Dr Ngema, feels that the relationship between him and Dr Ngema is fraught with tension and that “the politics between [them are] difficult and fragile” (31). Dr Ngema is a newly empowered black woman who has spent a large part of her life in exile and returned to South Africa after the collapse of apartheid to take up her position in the new government. It is clear however, that her position in the new government is tenuous, since she is constantly overlooked by authorities as the post in the Department of Health she was promised never becomes available. Every now and then there are rumours that her post has at last become available, but the excitement and hope always “subside[] again into resignation and disappointment” (32). Frank feels that this makes even the smallest conversations with Dr Ngema difficult as “this pushing and pulling” (32) makes them both aware of their powerlessness in the face of higher politics, but it also heightens their awareness of the power relationship between them. Frank admits that even though Dr Ngema and he call each other by their first names, he privately always thinks of her as *Dr Ngema*. This illustrates a level of formality applicable to an unequal power relationship.

Laurence’s arrival upsets the power balance between Frank and Dr Ngema. Frank and Dr Ngema have come to an uneasy agreement regarding their position, and Frank says that they have “a good working relationship” (12). Frank is at pains to point out that he and Dr Ngema are not friends. He further states that she “[does not]

have any friends". (Ironically the name Ruth means friend.) This defines Dr Ngema as an isolated, distant and formal person. Dr Ngema forms a sort of mirror image to Frank as he too is friendless and feels isolated.

Dr Ngema is the one who carries out all the surgery and she only lets Frank do minor procedures. In this way she cements her position as an authority figure. Frank admits that this "rankle[s] with him" (13) as he regards her as a bad surgeon. He does understand though that "Dr Ngema [is] sensitive to criticism" (13). Therefore, when Laurence points out that the patient whom Dr Ngema had operated on is suffering from the effects of sloppy surgery, both Frank and Dr Ngema are shocked at his lack of sensitivity to their protocol. Frank states that "this wasn't the time or place to be too direct" (13). For Dr Ngema and Frank the criticism does not only relate to medical incompetence, but it also highlights their precarious position in the hospital. The hospital depends on successful treatment of patients in order to justify its continued existence. For Frank Dr Ngema is not only a superior and adversary, but also an ally. If she can keep the hospital running long enough, then there is still a prospect of Frank getting her position when she leaves. Laurence's bluntness threatens this silent agreement between the two older doctors (21). Frank feels emasculated by Laurence as Laurence had the courage to speak up against Dr Ngema, something that Frank has hesitated to do due to his fragile position as a white man in the new dispensation. It is therefore interesting to note that in the workplace Laurence takes up the dominant, masculine position, whereas Frank submits to a passive role.

When Dr Ngema tells Laurence that he has to follow Frank because he is "a very experienced doctor" (14), she is not only referring to medical experience; she also means that Laurence can learn how to behave "correctly" towards her. She says to Laurence: "You can learn a lot ... from experienced people." (14) The ellipsis in the sentence emphasises this as it forces the reader to pause and consider what she means.

In a later scene, at Mama Mthembu's, a local bar where the staff and villagers often meet in the evenings, Frank again emphasises that Dr Ngema always maintains her distance from the other staff and rarely lets her guard down when he says:

At Mama's place, after hours, none of the divisions and hierarchy of the work situation applied. Themba and Julius, the two kitchen workers, were on a level with Jorge and Claudia. Sometimes Dr Ngema even joined these gatherings as an *uneasy equal*. (48) (My italics.)

Frank seems to imply that Dr Ngema is the one feeling uneasy, but it is also clear that Frank himself does not feel at ease mixing with the other hospital staff as he finds "the enforced intimacy over glasses of alcohol ... oppressive" (48) and he can "never relax[] completely" (48). This shows that he has a strong sense of hierarchy and of where he fits into this hierarchy. He is uncomfortable socialising with colleagues whom he regards as his subordinates. Laurence's presence however changes this as "some of Laurence's equanimity in these situations transferred itself to [Frank], so that [he] became less distant and aloof" (48).

South Africa is a place that has thrived on othering as the different races were pitted against each other during apartheid. As these boundaries collapse and new hierarchies form people have to renegotiate their positions. The once dominant now often find themselves in a position where their power is threatened and they have to find a way to integrate themselves into a new social order. The "new South Africa" is characterised by a society that is multicultural and multilingual and as the racial and cultural divisions that kept people apart have collapsed, individuals now constantly have to navigate between the different cultures (and languages). Oster explains that a person who exists amongst multiple cultures must constantly navigate between the different cultures and thus experiences him/herself as fragmented. She further argues that this fragmentation of the self, in bicultural fiction, is often expressed in the figure of the double (62). While *The Good Doctor* is strictly speaking not a bicultural text, Galgut's characters nevertheless exist in a multilingual, multicultural environment and are thus challenged to find their voice and space amongst competing discourses and ways of being.

In her analysis of doubles in American bicultural texts, Oster says that the doubles "represent that which keeps one from being "real" Americans, to be accepted [as such]" (71). She further states that

[t]o be accepted is to conform to what the society considers acceptable. To move *up* one must try to move *in*; to make it in a society where making it is the ideal, one must become “one of us”. But more to the point in this context: being considered “one of us” *is* making it. (71)

If transferred to *The Good Doctor*, it can be argued that Laurence reminds Frank of that which holds him back from being “a real South African”. Similarly, Živković points out that if we follow Jung’s theory of the shadow, the double is conceived of as neither good nor bad but rather as “a manifestation of desire, which seeks that which is experienced as absence and loss and points to its main function: to compensate for a lack resulting from cultural constraints” (126). Frank feels himself held back by his past experiences and fails to integrate into the new South African “rainbow society”. In an article on radicalized masculinities in contemporary British Asian male-authored texts, Ruvani Ranasinha claims that this failure by men to “engage with ‘mainstream, multicultural society’ disempowers them” (301) and can therefore lead to a backlash resulting in a radicalized masculinity marked by hypermasculine values, misogyny and homophobia (302). Frank, who feels disempowered by his failure to conform to the expectations of a man under the new South African dispensation, finds himself surrounded by versions of the “men he could have been” in the sense that the male characters in the novel represent different versions of masculinity ranging from the hypermasculinity and misogyny of his father and Colonel Moller to the equanimity and “grand gestures” of Laurence.

Frank has grown up with a father who managed to turn himself from an insignificant doctor on a mine to “something of a smash hit” (136) when he took advantage of the media coverage he received during a mine accident to launch his career. As a young doctor Frank feels the pressure to emulate his father (137), but fails to reach the same heights of success and thus considers himself a failure as his father never misses an opportunity to criticise his failed marriage and consequent decision to move to the hospital in the homeland. Nevertheless, Frank realises that he no longer aspires to be like his father as he says that his “place was somewhere else, in the rural hospital room full of cheap government furniture, where none of [his] father’s certainties applied” (144).

In an article titled “Post-Apartheid Disgrace: Guilty Masculinities in White South African Writing” Horrell claims that in much white writing after apartheid

The representation of white masculinity ... is particularly problematic, often deeply abject and arguably sketched in distinct contrast to that of the constructions of male subjectivity in colonial narratives and that of South African white culture under apartheid. There is a negotiation of an alternative masculinity at play: one which refutes and relinquishes dominance and attempts to enact a position of submission, confession – even ‘*voluntary redundancy*’. (1) (My italics.)

Frank, through his decision to remain at the hospital after the position of superintendent he was to occupy becomes unavailable could be interpreted as “voluntary redundancy” (1), an act of “guilty submission” (3). In this sense his resignation and effacement could be interpreted as noble, but Galgut challenges this notion by portraying Frank as self-serving, self-centred and cynical. Furthermore, the characterisation of Laurence as the “good doctor” who actively seeks to change things and who is unwilling to let the past define his masculinity and identity seems to refute Horrell’s claim of “guilty submission” (2). The juxtaposition of Frank and Laurence as two distinct examples of post-apartheid white masculinities opens up a space in which alternative masculinities can be explored without necessarily resolving the conflicts.

In his thesis on masculinity in male-authored post-apartheid novels, Crous explores the relationship between Frank and Laurence and comes to the conclusion that there is an “underlying homoerotic relation between the two doctors” (133). Reviewers such as Van der Vlies feel that there is a gay sub-plot in the novel that is “awkwardly marginalized” and would have been better if addressed more directly. There is undeniably an underlying homoerotic tension between Frank and Laurence and this merits some discussion. I shall look at this “suppressed gay sub-plot” in relation to Frank and Laurence as uncanny doubles and how they represent different facets of white masculinity.

In an article entitled “Postcolonial Triangles’: An Analysis of Masculinity and Homosocial Desire in Achebe’s *A Man of the People* and Greene’s *The Quiet American*” Beth Kramer examines the love triangle, where two men compete for the same woman, as a literary device to “represent the complexity of human desire” (1). While the love triangle, although present, is not a dominant feature in *The Good Doctor* and will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3 on *The Impostor*, the article nevertheless presents some useful ideas regarding doubling and masculinity.

Quoting Sedgwick, Kramer points out that “in any male-dominated society, there is a special relationship between male homosocial (*including* homosexual) desire and the structures for maintaining patriarchal power” (2). The desire to dominate or possess other men thus presents the vehicle by which hegemonic masculinity is contested or maintained. In her discussion of Greene’s novel Kramer notes that “Greene structures desire so that the bonds between men become filled with an intense passionate emotion that often outweighs heterosexual passion. At times this passion borders on the homoerotic” (6). I would argue that this holds equally true for the relationship between Frank and Laurence. While Frank is aggressively heterosexual, as can be seen in his compulsive affairs with the women he meets, there is a homoerotic tension underlying his relationship with Laurence which is indicative of a yearning for both dominance and intimacy. In fact, Frank uses women vicariously to experience closeness to Laurence, something that becomes glaringly obvious when he sleeps with Laurence’s girlfriend, Zanele, a point that will be explored in more detail later in this chapter.

In the new political dispensation Frank stands for the old order that represents guilt, stasis and passivity while Laurence represents the new order which is characterised by innocence, energy and activity. Anne McClintock states that “all nations depend on powerful constructions of gender in their declaration of nationhood” (in Kramer 3), and Reid and Walker claim that in South Africa “[a]n unquestionably patriarchal system has given way to new ideals of equality between men and women, which are enshrined in the Constitution” (1). Furthermore Walker explains that “[w]hile ‘constitutional sexuality’ seems to have shut some doors for men by shrinking the ‘patriarchal dividend’” this has at the same time created a space “for men to construct new masculinities” (*Negotiating the Boundaries of Masculinity* 161). Frank

and Laurence's relationship thus portrays a rapidly changing power dynamic as a result of the destabilisation of previous gender configurations.

By making Frank and Laurence share a room, Galgut manages to highlight the tensions between the two characters as they constantly invade each other's space and cannot avoid each other. Frank feels divided about Laurence as on the one hand he "welcomes the company" and on the other hand he sees him as an intruder and trouble maker. He regards Laurence as his "shadow", indicative of Jung's notion of the shadow self, "an unwanted usurper crowding [him] in [his] own room" (42). The bedroom, which is traditionally seen as a homely and intimate space (Lydenberg 1080), in *The Good Doctor* becomes contested territory and therefore an "unhomely" site for doubles.

Sharing a room with Laurence in a way transports Frank back to his days as a young conscript when he was carrying out his military service and thus it confronts him with a painful past. Frank notes that the last time he had to share a room with another man was as a soldier. Laurence's "invasion" of Frank's space is therefore an uncanny replica of his time in the army. Frank is troubled by sharing a room with another man now, because while in the army relationships with other men were governed by a "code of discipline imposed ... from the outside" there are no rules to abide by now. In a way this makes him feel insecure as he does not know how men behave towards each other when there are no strict hierarchies. In the private space of their room, a new hierarchy has to be fought out, which makes Frank aware of his own insecurity and vulnerability. Consequently he feels "under siege" (42). The word "siege" is a militaristic term and thus highlights the idea of a battle, of a fight for dominance and survival. Nevertheless, Frank also admits that there was a time when he would have welcomed "somebody sleeping close to [him]" (6) to provide "consolation and comfort" (6). Confronted with Laurence's presence in the room now, however, causes feelings of anger and resentment and Frank suppresses any affinity he feels towards Laurence.

Frank's resentment for Laurence is in part fuelled by an experience from his past. During his military service Frank became very close to a fellow doctor, Mike, and they formed a lasting friendship. After their military service had come to an end they

even set up a joint medical practice. Mike, however, betrayed their friendship when he had an affair with Frank's wife, Karen. Frank experiences the betrayal more as a betrayal by Mike rather than by Karen. This is made explicit when Frank says: "even though my love for Karen had dwindled to a faint interior glow, my hatred for Mike still burned big and bright" (142).

Frank describes his marriage to Karen as "something inevitable, in a social sense" (139) as they were "from similar backgrounds of privilege and wealth" (139). By suggesting that their coming together was "inevitable" Frank seems to say that his feelings for Karen were a result of fate and in a way this indicates a denial of responsibility on his part. Furthermore he puts the blame for the failure of their marriage firmly on Karen as he believes it to be the result of Karen "playing at being an idle madam at home" (139). Frank's delay in signing the divorce papers has nothing to do with a lingering love for Karen, but is rather intended as a punishment for Mike, who is not able to marry Karen as a result. When Frank tells Laurence about his marriage, it is interesting that he says that Karen and he are still "man-and-wife" (47) rather than husband-and-wife. The deliberate use of the word "man" seems to imply that the divorce will unman Frank, leading to his ultimate emasculation. Consequently Frank is portrayed as unable to form new friendships with men as he is reluctant to let anyone come this close to him again for fear of further humiliation.

When Laurence points out to Frank that he still wears his wedding ring, Frank realises that it is "more a symbol than a habit" (47). If read from a Freudian perspective, this implies that the ring represents his manhood and removing the ring would be tantamount to castration. Frank "close[s] [his] hand into a fist to hide it" (47). The fist is a symbol of strength and violence implying that Frank retreats into machismo in order to protect himself. His refusal to sign the divorce papers is consequently also an attempt at emasculating Mike.

When Laurence states "I would never do that [betray Frank]. Never, never, never." (47), he is proclaiming his loyalty and subservience to Frank. By saying to Frank that "[he] wouldn't wear that ring any more" (47) he is hinting at the possibility of a different kind of relationship, a relationship that defies the heteronormative

relationships by which Frank defines himself. Frank emphatically states that “the feeling wasn’t mutual. He was a room-mate to me, a temporary presence who was disturbing my life.” (47) He closes himself off from the possibility of a different masculinity that would allow for tenderness between men.

Frank thought of his military service as something “like a blankness, a dead patch in [his memory]” (61). For Frank it is something that “had been part of the life of every white man for forty years” (61) and he is incredulous at the fact that only a generation later it is already something that is regarded as history. Laurence’s probing into Frank’s past reminds him of a moment of weakness in which he was forced into an unethical act by his superior, Commandant Moller.

Commandant Moller in this incident represents the threatening and punitive masculinity associated with the military as explained by Barrett in his study of masculinity in the US navy. As already discussed in regard to *The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs*, the military “plays a primary role in shaping images of masculinity in the larger society” (77). This is an image of “toughness” and “unemotional logic” (77). Barrett further points out that in order to perpetuate this tough masculinity, young recruits are continually subjected to tests which serve to “create[...] boundaries of inclusion around those who exhibit strength, endurance and competence” (81). Frank is thus pressured into an unethical, even criminal act, by fear as his loyalty to the military and its regime is tested.

One evening in the army camp, while Mike and Frank are playing cards, Frank is summoned to stand in for his captain, another doctor. Frank is led to a prison cell where he finds Commandant Moller in the process of “questioning” a prisoner. Moller asks Frank whether the prisoner, who has been severely tortured, will still live. Frank immediately sees that the man needs medical care, but is forced to admit that the prisoner will not yet die. Frank feels bound by the Hippocratic Oath to help the suffering man, but the commandant phrases his question in such a way that Frank cannot escape an answer. The unflinching logic of the situation is that the prisoner is injured and needs medical attention, but at the same time he is not dying *yet*. Frank wants to believe that as a doctor he “perform[s] within the scope of [his] training” and that he would react “with the same tiny, myopic, amoral focus” (63) regardless of

whether the patient was an ally or an enemy. Yet he comes to the realisation that “[he] was afraid of the commandant and what he could do to [him]; this fear eclipsed the undefined reason [he] was being brought [to the prisoner’s cell], which might hurt [him] far more deeply” (64). Moller thus tricks Frank into becoming complicit in the further torture of the prisoner as he is powerless in the face of the commandant’s implied threat. In the end it comes down to an act of self-preservation by Frank as he justifies himself by saying:

It is myself I must look after, so that I don’t find myself in [the prisoner’s] place, naked on my back in a cell, not a doctor any more, a patient for whom there will never be a cure. (66)

In the end Frank comes to the conclusion that his “failure” was “an inevitable part of [his] position” (67), something that comes to set the tone for the rest of his life.

Commandant Moller is another of the men Frank “could have been”. Had he taken advantage of the situation to “distinguish [himself] in any way” (62), he could have followed in the footsteps of Moller. Crous suggests that Moller’s seemingly innocuous request to give his regards to the captain hints at the possibility of promotion for Frank, should he show himself to be a man of the “right” calibre and thinking (140). Frank is fascinated and repulsed at the same time by the power that Moller exuded then (in the army) and now as he re-enters Frank’s life. He confesses going to Mama Mthembu’s place in part because he wants to see Colonel Moller (164). Frank recognizes the similarity between him and the Colonel as he says: “*Like me*, he sat on his own, in a shadowed corner somewhere. *Like me*, he was always watching” (164) (My Italics). The repetition of “like me” sets the colonel up as Frank’s double. Frank comments that the colonel is “[n]ot a comforting sight ... but one [he] somehow needed” (164). Although the Colonel is described in an eroticized way through Frank’s gaze it becomes clear that the attraction of Colonel Moller resides in the power he exercises over other men. As Kaufmann has pointed out, hierarchies of power are not only established between men and women but also “among different groups of men and between different masculinities” (3). Frank points out that the real danger of Colonel Moller is not within the individual but in his capacity to organise men around him, men who are prepared to follow his orders unquestioningly (67).

Laurence proclaims that he feels he “missed out on a formative experience” (61) by not doing service in the army. Laurence’s romantic idealisation of the military as a rite of passage indicates his ignorance of the ideological dogma that underpins the military. Frank, who has had a glimpse of the brutality inherent in the army, condemns Laurence not only for his youthful romanticism, but for his failure to acknowledge the damage that has been inflicted on a whole society by the apartheid regime. Furthermore, Laurence’s naïve statement reminds Frank of his own unquestioning attitude and the fact that he “[had no] moral qualms about [his] job” (63). Frank tries to convince himself that anything he could have done to prevent the further torture of the prisoner “would have made no difference” (67) in the grand scheme of things. Laurence’s uncompromising work ethic and compassion for his patients and his genuine belief that he can change his environment angers Frank, because it reminds him of his own failings as a human being.

Laurence’s arrival sets in motion a chain reaction that thoroughly destabilises Frank’s view of himself and the people around him. As Lydenberg explains, being confronted with one’s double one “experiences the vulnerability of self-alienation” (1080). It is telling, for example, that on that first day of duty with Laurence, Frank renews his relationship with Maria. It is Laurence’s presence that awakens a compulsive need in Frank to visit her again as “[o]ld questions [he] had learned not to ask were back with [him] again. Old yearnings and needs” (21). It is not clear from the narrative what exactly these “questions” and “needs” are but it is clear that they are related to how he feels about Laurence. It hints at a conflicted desire, a desire for something illicit and unacceptable. Frank returns to the familiar intimacy with Maria in order to reaffirm to himself who he is.

Quoting Girard, Kramer explains that a narrative involving a love triangle “situates a mediator between a subject’s desire for an object, so that the reader is always confronted with two competing desires” (1). While Laurence is not a rival for Maria’s love, we still have a sort of triangular configuration between Frank, Laurence and Maria, Maria being the mediator. As stated above, Frank experiences Laurence’s closeness as oppressive and pleasant at the same time. By seeking intimacy with Maria he tries to suppress his yearning for intimacy with Laurence.

When Maria asks after Laurence one evening, Frank feels that every aspect of his life has been invaded by Laurence, whom he describes as “a manic disconcerting figure” (59). The word “manic” connotes madness and a loss of control. Frank thus feels that he has lost control of his own life and the impulse to sleep with Maria at this point seems to be a displacement of his desire for Laurence, and his desire to confront Laurence. Frank remarks that his encounters with Maria have become “hard and brutal and hungry” (58) with a propensity towards violence. He explains that “it was as if [he] was looking for something [he] couldn’t get to; the closest [he] could come was by hammering, hammering, on this heavy wooden door” (58). The roughness with which Frank treats Maria testifies towards a need to dominate and the relationship is almost abusive. By paying Maria for sex Frank divests himself of any emotional or moral responsibility he might have towards her and consequently sets up an exploitative relationship; “transactions, the limits of which [are] practical” (58). Maria becomes nothing more than an instrument through which Frank can express his feelings about himself and Laurence.

Laurence’s relationship with his girlfriend Zanele forms an interesting contrast to Frank’s relationship with Maria. Laurence and Zanele’s relationship is “conducted ritually, through photographs and letters” (44). It is a relationship characterised by an intellectual intimacy rather than physical intimacy. Frank regards this as “odd” (44) thus questioning the reality of the relationship. The “shrine” (43) that Laurence builds for Zanele also implies a certain adulation and admiration for Zanele that borders on the religious, which seems to suggest innocence and purity; a complete contrast to the almost exclusively physical relationship between Frank and Maria.

An interesting point to notice is that the names of the two women are strangely inverted. Zanele, who is from a middleclass American background, assumes an African name, while Maria, who is African, assumes a European, Christian name. Furthermore, the name Maria has connotations of the Virgin Mary, which would suggest asexuality, innocence and purity. However, this is also ambiguous as the name Maria can also be connected to the biblical Mary Magdalene, who is believed to have been a prostitute. In his dealings with Maria, Frank is also torn between the desire to treat her affectionately and the impulse to treat her as a sex object. The

portrayal of Maria therefore reveals a certain anxiety about women in the sense of the virgin-whore split. It is only after Laurence's disappearance that Frank comes to the realisation that Maria is a person deserving of compassion and he attempts to find her in order to effect some kind of reparation, though he is not sure if he wanted to "buy her back, or to make [his] final appearance worthwhile" (214). The fact that he wants to offer her money shows, however, that he has not changed his attitude regarding their relationship. In fact, Frank comes to the conclusion that "to her [he] was just a background detail, bringing mystery and disturbance" (213). With this he seems to say that Maria is in fact the one who exploited him rather than the other way around.

While Laurence seems to be proud of his girlfriend Frank notices that he also seems "relieved that she is far away" (44). Laurence's relationship with a woman therefore appears to be a front masking his vulnerability in a heteronormative society. As Butler (*Gender Trouble* 25) has pointed out, gender roles are performative acts that are reinforced by the repeated performance of the same rituals that constitute a particular version of masculinity or femininity. Thus gender is not a stable concept, but always subject to change and subversion. Nevertheless, the enactment of gender identity is maintained by what Butler terms "cultural intelligibility". This means that gender and identity is produced through "regulatory practices" (*Gender Trouble* 17) of culture that "generate coherent identities through the matrix of coherent gender norms" (17). She further explains that this cultural matrix "requires that certain kinds of 'identities' cannot 'exist'" (17). In this sense Galgut is drawing attention to the fact that neither Frank nor Laurence can acknowledge their mutual attraction to each other as it does not fit into what they see as a legitimate behaviour between men.

When Zanele finally comes to visit Laurence at the hospital it is as if Laurence tries to find any possible excuse not to spend time with her. He even leaves finding a hotel room to Frank. Frank therefore takes up the role as the strong male taking responsibility for supplying the safe "home" for the woman, while Laurence takes up a more passive role. Laurence also refuses to spend the night with Zanele, saying that he wouldn't want to leave Frank to clear up the room alone after the party (91).

Laurence therefore implies that his responsibility towards Frank is stronger than towards Zanele.

When Laurence asks Frank to spend time with Zanele while he is on duty, it is almost as if Frank takes up Laurence's place as "the boyfriend". His impulse to sleep with Zanele is therefore in part engineered by Laurence. Frank states that "even then – before the climb up the stairs, the bedroom with the hard little bed – all the echoes from the evening were with us, so that more than two people were grappling together there in the dark" (113 – 114). Afterwards Frank states: "What I felt that night was a kind of perverse closeness to him [Laurence], as if an agreement had been fulfilled: as if the contract was between him and me, and she was the instrument." (115) This passage is interesting in its ambiguity. If we follow Sedgwick's theory of the love triangle as a vehicle to establish dominance between two men, it is clear that Frank uses Zanele to punish Laurence, to assert his masculinity over him and to deflect any impulse of tenderness towards him by displaying aggressive heterosexuality (in Kramer 2). He states that he felt a "perverse closeness" to Laurence, and Crous points out that the word "perverse" implies that he regards being close to Laurence as unacceptable (133).

Nevertheless, one can also argue that Laurence feels the same need for closeness to Frank and as Frank consistently rejects him he pushes his girlfriend towards Frank to act as a mediator. Saying that "the contract was between him [Laurence] and me [Frank]" (115) implies a mutual understanding since a contract always depends on two agreeing parties. While at first glance Laurence seems to be the innocent, hurt party in this configuration, it is also possible that he has found a way to manipulate Frank into a position of guilt that, in fact, diminishes the power he holds over Laurence. Not long after her visit Laurence and Zanele's relationship comes to an end indicating that she has fulfilled her role as a go-between and is therefore no longer needed.

Sharing a room with Laurence in many ways means a loss of privilege and status for Frank. When he is first told by Dr Ngema about Laurence coming to the hospital, Frank believes that this will not affect him (7). When he learns that he will have to share a room with Laurence, however, he experiences it as a loss of power. He

immediately assumes that the reason he and Laurence are put in the same room is not so much the result of both of them being doctors, but because they are both white men (8). This makes Frank aware of his own whiteness and his position as a white man. His whiteness having been unmarked until that point, he has to take cognisance of it for the first time. This in turn forces him to take notice of the people around him and he is uncomfortable with what he sees. Up until that point, for example, Frank had not paid much attention to Tehogo, the black male nurse, as he had only “been a silent presence at the dark end of the passage, or sitting at the edge of staff meetings” (55). Relegating Tehogo to the “dark end” and to “the edge” show how marginal Tehogo is to Frank. It is only when Laurence arrives that Frank feels Tehogo’s presence as being significant. Frank admits that when Laurence arrives “[he] had to notice Tehogo” because “[Tehogo] was in the doctor’s room where Laurence should be” (55). Tehogo had been accommodated in a doctor’s room as an interim measure after losing his home and Frank resents the idea that he will have to give up his privacy while Tehogo still enjoys a privilege which he is not entitled to in the first place. Giving in to Dr Ngema’s request to share the room with Laurence is therefore not only bowing to the authority of Dr Ngema, but also a loss of superiority over Tehogo. The only way in which Frank can deal with this loss is by dominating and subjugating that which has caused him the loss, in other words Laurence.

Tehogo is the only nurse at the hospital. Employed under the homeland regime, he was trained as a nurse but never passed his exams, yet for lack of any other nurses he is kept on at the hospital to do all “the countless little petty labours” (54) nobody else wants to do. Frank suspects that Dr Ngema’s concern for Tehogo goes “deeper than the professional side of things” (54). As rumour has it, Tehogo is a distant relative of the brigadier’s and therefore takes up a privileged position at the hospital. He is said to have lost his family during a violent uprising against the brigadier and only escaped death himself because he was at the hospital at the time. While Frank acknowledges that this must have been a traumatic loss for Tehogo, he is angered by the idea that Tehogo is a poor dispossessed victim of the apartheid regime, because he feels that Tehogo is being favoured and let off the hook on many counts (55).

During the party for Zanele Frank finds himself dancing opposite Tehogo in a drunken and somewhat frenzied state. The scene is almost carnivalesque in Bakhtinian terms as it is characterised by chaos and a breaking down of the usual hierarchy of the hospital as the encounter is characterized by “madness” and by Frank’s recognition that “[he doesn’t] know what’s true any more” (91). With the party Laurence has created a space in which the normal workplace boundaries are erased and overturned. It is only because of this atmosphere that Frank and Tehogo can talk to each other in an unconfined way. Frank comments that “[Tehogo’s] grinning, sweating face seemed mad to me, till I recognized in it a mirror image of my own” (90). Only in his drunken state can Frank admit to himself that he and Tehogo are the same as they have both been beneficiaries of the apartheid era. More than that, Frank recognises in Tehogo his own dark and murderous impulses. Tehogo jokingly says that he will come in the night to cut off Frank’s head and, as the scene described in the opening of this chapter shows, Frank himself contemplates murdering Laurence in his sleep. The next day Frank and Tehogo’s relationship returns to its normal “dourness and sourness and mistrust” (94). Frank notes that “[t]he past [was] recharged and renewed. Nothing was different after all” (94). Once normal order is restored everybody falls back into their usual roles and nothing but a lingering sense of unease remains of Frank’s encounter with Tehogo.

Being unable to derive any sort of lasting meaning from his encounters with the people around him, Frank wants to “keep everything fixed and rooted in its place” (80). Nevertheless, when confronted with Laurence’s blind faith in the power of the individual and his categorical dismissal of the influence of politics, Frank is forced to face his own stasis and denial. Frank’s final moment of catharsis comes when Tehogo is shot. Frank feels directly responsible for Tehogo’s injury as he told the colonel to look for the robbers, who have been plaguing the town with violence and of whom Tehogo is believed to be one of them, in the army camp. Frank’s compulsive caring for the injured Tehogo mirrors his encounter with the SWAPO prisoner, for whom he could not care. Both nameless and faceless the prisoner is reduced to a symbol for injustice and pain. Tehogo is represented in contrast to this inscription of the suppressed and abject young man. Frank describes him as “young and good-looking, and he was always dressed in natty new clothes.” (54) He further states that “[t]here was money coming to him from somewhere, but this was never

mentioned by anybody.” (54-55) The reader is thus invited to question the popular image of the dispossessed victim of apartheid. By mentioning Tehogo’s ties to the brigadier, the reader is led to believe that the money comes from the brigadier, thus implying that Tehogo has benefited from the apartheid regime as much as Frank has.

Nevertheless, it is the first time that we see Frank really caring for someone and it is as if he is trying to expiate his sins of the past. However, it is also important to notice that Frank can only feel compassion towards Tehogo once he is broken and helpless. Frank can only allow himself to feel anything for another person once that person is absolutely vulnerable and wounded. His behaviour towards Tehogo thus also mirrors his behaviour towards Maria. Frank has used Maria to punish Laurence, and only once he thinks of her as bleeding and wounded, can he get himself to see her as a real person.

In his treatment of Tehogo, Frank and Laurence’s roles are reversed. Laurence, who is usually the caring, good doctor, is indifferent to Tehogo’s fate and continues in his plans for the clinic. Laurence intuitively knows that Tehogo has become more to Frank than a mere patient and points out to Frank that Tehogo might just be a symbol to him, a chance to make up for his past bad behaviour (194). Although Frank dismisses this idea, his compulsive need to make Tehogo understand that he is “not his enemy” contradicts his denial.

As a result of one of Laurence’s outreach clinics, Maria approaches Laurence to perform an abortion. The suspicion is that the child might be Frank’s and therefore the logical conclusion would be that Frank help her. Yet Frank refuses to take any responsibility and instead delights in Laurence’s ethical dilemma. He feels that having to perform the abortion is just punishment and will teach Laurence that he cannot only think of his actions as symbols, but that they have real consequences, consequences, incidentally, that Frank refuses to face himself (159). As he watches Laurence, Frank almost takes up the position of a torturer as he becomes “fascinated by the complexities of [Laurence’s] agony, like the torments of a man who must solve some impossible equation” (162). Like a torturer intent on breaking

the spirit of his victim, Frank asserts that he “wanted to push things to the point where Laurence’s easy rules would break” (166).

When Laurence returns, Frank notices with satisfaction that “the quality, whatever the quality was, that had given his face distinction, was gone” (168). Laurence has lost his innocence and Frank feels he has finally triumphed over Laurence. In a sense they become the same man, disillusioned and broken. They are both naked, which is not only a physical nakedness, but is also indicative of an emotional nakedness as they are completely exposed and vulnerable; each man feels that he has seen the true nature of the other. That night they switch beds therefore symbolically owning the space of the other. Frank begins to realize that he is bound to Laurence in an inexplicable way as he says:

A picture had come to me, and it was of Laurence and me as two strands in a rope. We were twined together in a tension that united us; we were different to each other, though it was in our nature to be joined and woven in this way. As to the points we were spanned between – a rope doesn’t know what its own purpose is. (170)

In the end both Laurence and Tehogo are abducted and disappear. This allows Frank to finally own up to his conflicted feelings towards himself and his past. Citing Keppler, Oster explains that the double acts as an “instrument of self-exploration”(72) and that even though the double may seem to be the “dark or destructive other” it is also “a force for good and for healing” (72). The double in all its facets is therefore not necessarily a destructive force but also what Keppler (in Oster) terms The Saviour. When Frank perceives himself and Laurence as being two strands in the same rope, he realises that Laurence is not only somebody to be resented, but that in many ways he is essential for Frank to survive. He needs Laurence in order to make sense of his own life. Frank concludes that although “the situation is dire and the prospects not good” (215) he is content. He feels that he “[has] come into [his] own” (215). He further wonders whether any of this would have been possible if he had not had to share a room with Laurence. Through Laurence Frank has realised that despite the pain that apartheid has inflicted on him, there is hope for the future.

Chapter 5: “I have an amazing wife”: The Uncanny Canning in *The Impostor*

Adam, the protagonist of *The Impostor*, has an affair with his friend Canning’s wife, Baby. He is consumed by the affair and thinks it acutely unfair that such “a small, sad sketch of a man [Canning], who is in his position not through hard work or brilliance, but through an arbitrary turn of fate” (139), should be married to the gorgeous Baby. During a particularly sinister conversation, Baby hints at the possibility of changing fate through murder and Adam, who on a previous occasion saved Canning’s life when he slipped on a rock during a hike, reflects that “[i]f Canning had fallen and died, he would have left behind a blank place, an absence, into which Adam could have stepped” (138).

The fact that Adam sees himself stepping into and occupying the void Canning would have left indicates that Adam perceives Canning as his double and that he believes that he could indeed become that same man. In his essay “The Uncanny”, Freud claims that in the double “[t]here are all the possibilities which, had they been realized, might have shaped our destiny, and to which our imagination still clings, all the strivings of the ego that were frustrated by adverse circumstances, all the suppressed acts of volition that fostered the illusion of free will” (142). At the moment of realisation that “[f]ate can be moulded by the will” (139) Adam intuits that a small act (or in fact inaction) could alter who he is, could change the kind of man he is, make him into Canning, or whoever he chooses to be.

The Impostor was first published in 2008, five years after *The Good Doctor*. It was described as “an antipastoral postapartheid noir” (www.publishersweekly.com 35), “[i]n one sense a conventional crime caper ... [i]n another, ... a critique of contemporary South Africa” (Skidelsky, “A Fresh Eye”). What is clear from these reviews is that *The Impostor* combines elements of crime fiction and socio-political critique. In many ways the novel makes use of elements and concepts found in *noir fiction* and in *film noir* with its “pessimistic mood ... often one of foreboding; a peculiarly intense anxiety; obsession, usually sexual; and above all a tension created by fear of violence and the inevitability of death” (Crowther 8). Furthermore, a

hallmark of film noir, the femme fatale, can be found in Baby, who becomes Adam's obsession in the course of the story and ultimately leads to his downfall.

Whereas *The Good Doctor* can be read as a transitional novel, one that straddles the period between apartheid and post-apartheid, *The Impostor* is firmly rooted in contemporary South Africa. While the apartheid past necessarily still figures in the narrative, it is no longer a major focus. Positions of race and gender are no longer necessarily negotiated in terms of political guilt or redress, but rather in the face of a rampant capitalist economy. However, Butler argues that race, gender and class can never be kept distinct as "one often becomes the condition of the articulation of the other" (On Speech, Race and Melancholia 168). While race continues to play an important role in identity formation, I argue that in the novel it has largely been overtaken by a class struggle. This is apparent in the way that the characters in *The Impostor* exert power through their relative positions of wealth. Canning is only powerful because he inherited his father's estate and Adam finds himself powerless as a result of losing his job. Obviously this economic power play is informed by race as Canning's wealth is a direct result of white Apartheid wealth and Adam is retrenched due to affirmative action.

In this economically driven power struggle Baby takes up an interesting position as far as women are concerned. Although she certainly is not representative of all South African women, nor even all black South African women, she seems to represent a troubling vision of black female power. In this chapter I explore how the men in the novel are represented as uncanny doubles to each other, each embodying particular anxieties, fears and desires of men - and white men in particular - in contemporary South Africa. I will furthermore discuss Baby as a femme fatale and analyse how this may reveal an admiring but also troubling and even misogynistic view of black post-apartheid femininity.

Before proceeding to a close reading of the novel, I would like to explain why the history of the *femme fatale*, combined with theories of the double and the uncanny form an interesting framework for the analysis of *The Impostor*.

The figure of the *femme fatale* – a woman who is both seductive and deadly – has had many cultural manifestations throughout history, but she is best known from hard-boiled detective novels and *film noir*. *Film noir* is a genre of films that emerged around the 1940s in America. The term was coined by French film critics who noticed that American films of the period seemed to be characterised by a particularly dark and sinister mood that was transmitted visually as well as in the narrative. In a typical *noir* plot there are no clear heroes or “good guys”; the protagonist is often a weak man, a loser or morally ambiguous figure with his own occult moral code. A further feature of film noir is the *femme fatale*, a strong willed and sexually attractive woman, who ensnares the hero and tries to lure him to his doom. She is sexually aggressive, frightening and ultimately monstrous. In his study of the genre of *film noir*, Bruce Crowther describes the *femme fatale* thus:

She was calculating, manipulative, cruel and she used her sexual attractions blatantly and without regard for the polite conventions of the past. She knew what she wanted and she didn't care what she did to get it. She understood that while society had dealt her a low hand from a stacked deck, she did have an ace up her sleeve: her body. (115)

As I will demonstrate in this chapter, Baby fits the role of the classic *femme fatale*, in all but one sense. Whereas the classic *femme fatale* is deadly not only to those around her but also to herself – that is to say she is always punished somehow by the end of the narrative – in *The Impostor* Baby seems to get away with her dubious dealings. Furthermore, in *The Impostor* the representation of the *femme fatale* is complicated by what I would call a colonial gaze which I will show by comparing two key passages from *The Impostor* with a passage from Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.

Crowther also argues that film noir “show[s] the other side of the American dream, in which death has been preceded not by success but by grim failure” (9). This is an interesting point regarding *The Impostor* as one can argue that this novel also undoes the idea of the South African “dream”. Kostelac in her article on *The Impostor* has noted that much of the novel reflects upon “the materialism and corruption that appear increasingly to define the collective psyche of the ‘new’ South

Africa" (53). Following the collapse of apartheid the country experienced a sense of euphoria and hope and people believed that anybody could succeed, provided they worked hard. Adam was one such person, filled with hope for a better future and he therefore feels bitterly disappointed when his hopes are dashed. Instead of the new dawn he experiences disillusionment when he realises that old inequalities have simply been replaced by new ones, and that as a white male he now faces disempowerment. Adam observes that "there had appeared a new phenomenon in Johannesburg: *white people* at the traffic lights, wearing old clothes and a hopeless air, begging." (17) [My italics.] Although Adam admits that he "[isn't] anywhere near that state himself" (17), he is aware of the real possibility of complete poverty as he loses the security of his job. He is furthermore disheartened by the fact that his optimism has been punished whereas his brother's pessimism has not yielded any punishment. While Adam looked forward towards a more egalitarian South Africa, his brother, Gavin, feared retribution from the new black government and even considered emigration to protect himself from dispossession. The reality turned out to favour Gavin, who was able to make good use of his opportunistic business sense as a building constructor to attain a position of wealth, while Adam was retrenched and replaced by a young black man he had been unwittingly training for months (18). Adam reflects on this bitter irony as he thinks that "[i]t didn't seem right that it should have worked out like this: with Adam unemployed and homeless, and his brother talking loudly about opening up the country" (18). What this particular passage reveals is that in the end materialism triumphs over idealism, a topic that is taken up repeatedly in the novel. Blaser in his article "Looking at *The Heart of Whiteness* in South Africa Today" argues that in contemporary South Africa consumer society "plays such an important legitimizing role in new forms of identity-making" that it often eclipses politics (88), and *The Impostor* seems to be a meditation on post-apartheid South Africa as a corrupt neo-liberal economy.

Adam used to live a comfortable middle class life. After the collapse of apartheid he gradually loses his footing in this life as he fails to read the signs and consequently loses both his job and his home. Shell-shocked by these events, he depends on the goodwill of his brother, Gavin, a wealthy building constructor, who offers him a place to stay until Adam can "get things worked out" (15). Adam only grudgingly accepts his brother's generosity as he feels uneasy about how Gavin comes by his wealth.

Gavin has a shrewd business sense and has leapt at the opportunity to provide cheap housing for the newly empowered, mostly black, masses. For him the importance lies in that it “look[s] good” (17) rather than providing real quality work. In his own way Gavin seems corrupt as he is seen to have good silver fittings and pipes removed from the houses he guts and replaced by cheap copper in the new construction. Adam resents that Gavin, whom he sees as an exploitative opportunist, should thrive while he is homeless. Faced by a society that favours white men of Gavin’s calibre, Adam turns to poetry to save himself. After rejecting a job offer from Gavin for moral reasons, he accepts Gavin’s suggestion to stay in an old house his brother owns in a small Karoo town. Surrounded by nature and beauty Adam hopes to find his poetic self again and forge a new identity and existence.

Nevertheless, the house and the town turn out to be different to what Adam expected. Instead of lush, green, abundant nature he finds a garden full of weeds, a dusty house and an arid and harsh landscape that fails to inspire poetry. In an interview with Haydee Morgan – Hollander, Galgut points out that Adam’s vision of the country as “unchanging and timeless is actually a romantic idea” and he further states that “landscape can be romanticised only when it’s emptied of people - which is to say drained of history”. The moment Adam arrives at the house he is reminded of the fact that the house has a history and he feels this as an “almost physical sensation” (7). Adam perceives the house to “claim[] him” (7) which suggests that he becomes part of the house’s history. In fact he feels “as if another person, from another time, was buried under his skin. This person was squatting by a fire, with a vast darkness pressing in”(9). Adam thus realises that he is inescapably part of a larger history than his own.

Furthermore nature has invaded the space in an unpleasant way in the form of rotting fruit, tough weeds, dust and dirt, making it an unhomely space in which Adam feels estranged from his ideals and from himself. This self-alienation later presents itself in the spirit self he invents for himself and with whom he has conversations. The more Adam tries to control his environment, the weeds and the house, the more he feels split and the more he seems to lose his sense of reality. Nature in *The Impostor* is thus consistently seen as an invading and destructive force far removed from Adam’s romantic idea of the pastoral as reconstitutive and rejuvenating.

In addition to that nature also becomes a means of political pressure and power throughout the novel. The mayor thus tries to intimidate Adam by threatening to fine him if he doesn't tidy up the garden; a gesture that has little to do with the garden per se but is rather intended to show Adam that he has to conform to the town's regime.

Adam also fails to connect with the local people, who either congregate around a reactionary ex-rugby player, Fanie Prinsloo, or belong to a pseudo-spiritual group who believe in spirits and presences. Therefore far from the poetic idyll of Adam's fantasy, the town presents itself as being "somewhere that [is] nowhere, in which the light [is] too blindingly stark, and in which it [is] always Sunday afternoon" (25). Thus sinking into loneliness and depression, Adam is relieved when he is invited to visit the Cannings on their game farm in the mountains.

Throughout the novel money is seen to be the driving force behind the characters' actions. The novel opens with Adam driving towards the small Karoo town where he is to take up residence after losing his house in the city. As Adam fails to stop at a stop sign on the empty and lonely road, a traffic policeman steps out of the bushes and proceeds to write a ticket. As Adam tries to convince the police officer not to fine him and to let him off with a warning, the officer casually tells Adam that he would indeed be prepared to drop the charges if Adam "made it worth [his] while" (4). Adam, who only moments before had asked the police officer to disregard the rules, is now shocked by this blatant act of bribery and decides to stick to his principles and rather pay the fine than become party to corrupt behaviour. This scene is particularly interesting as it sets the tone for the entire narrative that follows. Adam constantly finds himself caught between the desire to stick to his idealistic principles or to fold and give in to his darker, more corrupt side. This recalls Laurence's idealism and principles in *The Good Doctor*. Yet, while Laurence was absolute in his principles and somewhat naïve in his idealism, Adam is portrayed as more moderate and also more ambiguous. Adam perceives the police officer as a threat although "no threat had been made" (5). This threat the reader intuitively feels is the threat of Adam's own moral core collapsing and giving in to the corrupt practices around him. In fact, the reader is told that the traffic officer "stood like a dark gatekeeper at the door to Adam's new life, blocking the path, one hungry hand extended" (5).

Adam's inner conflict about who he is and where he belongs runs deeper though than a mere binary opposition between good and evil. Adam has lost all moral sense of what is good and what is evil as it is expressed in the following passage:

In the distant past, he had always been clear about his moral position, but that wasn't the case any more. These days, he found himself taking the opposite stand to what ever political point had been raised. If people liked the new road, he would start to wonder what vices and other problems the road might bring. On the other hand, if people said the road was a bad thing, he would think of it as progress and development. His ambivalence was genuine; there seemed to be both a radical and a reactionary buried in him. More than anything, it was this fault-line in his psyche that he thought of as his new South African self. (28)

As with *The Good Doctor* we can see that the characters see themselves as internally divided. In an interview with Andie Miller, Galgut states that during apartheid "you were either with the system or against the system" (142) and consequently moral positions were very clearly delineated. Apartheid depended on vilifying one side and glorifying the other and identity was always defined against the "other". In the passage above Adam realises that these previously acceptable positions have disappeared and he struggles to find his place in the new society. He thus concludes that his identity is for the most part inscribed in the ambivalence he feels towards his social environment. Being a white man thus partly means being unsure of yourself. When confronted with the "sad, lost people, nursing their bigotry" (29) in Fanie Prinsloo's bar Adam is clear that he cannot identify with these people, who feel that the new government is "taking away [their] heroes" (28), yet he also condemns the "vague apolitical way" (29) of the group of people at the bed-and-breakfast who find that "any change ... could only be for the better" (29) (a phrase that also recalls Laurence's naïve optimism in *The Good Doctor*). Adam in fact finds himself using some of the arguments he heard in the bar to counter the excessive optimism of the bed-and-breakfast people which shows that despite himself he does feel the need to protect his position as a white man in South Africa. It becomes clear that there is no clear position to take as on the one hand there is a definite need for

the white people of the town to safeguard their existence and future in South Africa and on the other hand there is a need for change and innovation in order to improve the lives of the township people too. Much of Adam's ambivalence about the changes the new road and the pass have brought to the town, however, comes from the realisation that the motivation for building the road is not inspired by a desire to improve people's lives, but by greed and corruption.

Adam's self-division is further illustrated through his interaction with Canning and Baby who come to "adopt" him as part of their family and rescue him from loneliness. Interestingly, while in *The Good Doctor* Galgut made his two protagonists share a room, thus putting them in very close proximity to each other, Canning is mostly absent during Adam's stay at Gondwana. A sense of false or dubious intimacy is created by Canning claiming to be a very close school friend of Adam's. Adam, however, does not remember Canning at all. It is entirely possible that Canning is mistaken and confuses Adam with somebody else from his childhood; this is however never cleared up.

Canning claims to know Adam from school, an impression that is reinforced by Canning calling Adam by his nickname, Nappy. The appellation immediately infantilises and demotes Adam as it recalls the arena of homosocial bonding at boarding school, and seems to refer not only to his surname Napier, but also to a bedwetting episode in Adam's childhood (45). The name, which Adam experiences "like a badge of shame" (46) is thus demeaning, a reminder both of his infantile fears and tortures as well as his current disempowered state. The name Canning, on the other hand, calls up ideas of "cunning" and "the uncanny", both equally fitting to Canning's character.

In their first meeting, however, Canning is described in an almost caricaturesque way. He looks like "one of those Easter eggs on which a child has painted a simple expression" (46) and Adam even wonders whether he is "mentally deficient" (47). Furthermore he is "plump", "bland" and "almost colourless" (45). In a later scene in the forest, Adam observes that "Canning's body is flabby and pale, a little endomorphic and sexless, his big belly overhanging his shorts" (115), which in turn leads to Adam feeling "lean and thin" and "almost desirable" (115). There is thus

nothing in Canning's physique that is traditionally associated with male power and desirability. Nevertheless, he displays typical macho behaviour by stressing his wealth as he constantly jangles loose change in his pockets; he drives an expensive new car (49) and boasts about having built the *Nuwe Hoop* village "for nothing" (51). One of the first things he says to Adam is "I have an amazing wife" (46) followed up by asking Adam if he is married. This is an overt invitation for Adam to "compete" with him. In fact, Adam cannot help but engage in this kind of male competition and consequently lies about which house he lives in because in "a moment of shame [...]" he doesn't want Canning to see the run-down house" (47). Interestingly, later at Gondwana, when Adam tries to figure out who Canning is, he concludes that without the inherited fortune from his father, Canning would still be "a nothing, a nobody" and married "to his first, *no doubt dowdy wife*" (66) (My Italics.). Having a "gorgeous black woman hanging on" (66) therefore clearly denotes masculine power and success.

Despite Canning's apparent shortcomings though, there is an almost sexual tension between the two men, an idea which is reinforced by Canning's cryptic reference to "the cloakroom" (46). Adam cannot help but feel flattered by Canning's admiration for his poetry and he admits to feeling "absurdly pleased" (47) by Canning's praises and he feels that "at last, there is someone who understands" (47). Adam even admits to "the unsettling feeling of being courted" (49) when Canning picks him up. In what can be deemed an almost sexual gesture, Canning "[runs] a plump hand over the upholstery" (49) of his new car betraying a displaced desire to caress Adam. Later that evening in a drunken state Canning (accidentally?) "plants a wet kiss on [Adam's] mouth" (63) which seems to confirm this desire. Furthermore when talking to Adam about Baby, Canning seems to fall into a panic and says "I love my wife, Nappy. I love her very badly! I don't want to give her up." (55) This statement is ambiguous as it could either mean that Canning fears Adam would take Baby away from him or that Adam would take the place of Baby as Canning's lover. It would almost appear that Canning recognises his desire for Adam and unconsciously expresses this by saying that he loves Baby "badly" in the sense that his love for her is incomplete or insincere.

Adam later tries to remember Canning from school, but admits that while there is “a vague sense of familiarity” (66) he also experiences it as an “erasure” (66) and that the “effort of trying to remember is setting things loose in him” (66) resulting in the “sensation of pushing against a psychic wall, an invisible, elastic barrier, on the other side of which the past is stored up” (66). This seems to point to repression on Adam’s part of the closeness he might have shared with Canning at some point. Adam dismisses the notion of a repressed homosexual encounter with Canning though as “he isn’t likely to have forgotten that” (66). Nevertheless he also experiences Canning’s “juvenile crush” (66) as something dangerous as he compares it to “sitting too close to the fire” (66).

As neither man can admit to or express their desire for the other directly, their desire manifests itself in a rivalry for Baby. Discussing Girard, Sedgwick, in her study on homosocial desire, explains that “the choice of the beloved is determined in the first place, not by the qualities of the beloved but by the beloved’s already being the choice of the person who has been chosen as a rival” (21). Following Sedgwick’s argument, Adam starts an affair with Baby, not because he feels particularly attracted to her, but because he perceives Canning as a rival. In fact, in the beginning Adam is irritated and repulsed by Baby and at one point he even starts “to actively dislike her” (60). Nevertheless, Baby becomes the driving force between Adam and Canning’s interactions. Sedgwick explains that “the bond between rivals in an erotic triangle [seems] even stronger, more heavily determinant of actions and choices, than anything in the bond between either of the lovers and the beloved” (21). It would therefore seem that Adam’s obsession with Baby is a result of his desire (and loathing) for Canning rather than any true feelings for Baby herself. Conversely, it is also true that Canning keeps pushing Adam and Baby together thus engineering their intimacy. Throughout the novel Canning speaks of Adam in exulted terms, similar to the way he speaks about Baby, thus betraying his desire for Adam. In a revealing conversation Canning says that he wants Adam “to be happy as [he is]”, that he wants him “to have somebody like Baby” (134). Baby can consequently be seen as both the object of desire as well as a mediator for unexpressed or socially unacceptable desire.

In an article on masculinity and homosocial desire, Beth Kramer explores the love triangle between two men and a woman in terms of “larger political and cultural relationships” (5). She writes that “[w]e can imagine a homosocial triangle, in which the former colonizer and the new nationalist elite mutually gain strength at the expense of the continued oppression of the former colonized body. These models offer insight into how the construction of asymmetrical triangulated desire can portray homosocial bonds in terms of a country or nation’s ‘desire’” (3). Thus the men’s struggle for masculinity and power over a woman’s body becomes representative of a larger political struggle for power over people and land. Canning in a way represents the old white elite with its money and land and Adam represents a weakened white masculinity that is trying to maintain some modicum of influence in the new political order. Canning sees himself as having rescued Baby from a demeaning and poverty ridden life and it is literally only his money that keeps her tied to him. This is evident in his continued paranoia that Baby will leave him or that he will have “to give her up” (107). Similarly Canning stays useful to the new political elite as he can offer land and money for their schemes. Adam’s desire for Baby is not fuelled by any real passion for her but by a desire to maintain a masculine image vis à vis Canning and other men. Adam cannot compete with Canning on an economic scale and therefore seeks to disempower him by taking Baby away from him. In this configuration, Baby is however not only the stereotypical passive object, the dispossessed native, who becomes the plaything of the men in their quest for power. While on the one hand she is “an exotic doll” (54), a “blank oval” (80) and a “vain, vacuous , lovely little doll” (80), a passive thing of beauty, she is also worshipped and idealised by the men around her. It is as Kramer says about one of the characters in Greene’s novel: “Her character represents the center of objectification, yet also a power source to disrupt and ultimately control the men who fight over her” (12). The literary love triangle thus is a depiction of how homosocial bonds are reinforced while at the same time showing its potential for the disruption of male power.

It has to be noted furthermore, that much of the male bonding between Adam and Canning takes place while they are talking about Baby. Canning, for example, confides in Adam that he and Baby are no longer sexually intimate and the confession evokes both “sympathy and a treacherous stab of joy” (107) in Adam.

The exchange consequently draws him closer to Canning as a friend, in the sense that they share confidences, while at the same time making him feel closer to Baby as he feels affirmed in his masculinity since he is sleeping with Baby. In the presence of both men, the power Baby exerts over them individually is however negated by the stronger bond between the two men. This is apparent in an instance when Baby interrupts a conversation about her between Adam and Canning and she changes from “a dark mass ... impossible to measure” (109) to “nothing” (110).

In all Galgut’s novels women are portrayed as exploitative. They are fickle and frightening, incomprehensible and they are motivated by selfishness. Baby is the most frightening of these women as she does not let herself be controlled by men. As mentioned above, she can be compared to the *femme fatale* of *film noir* because of the way in which she manipulates men with her sexuality. Moreover, like the classic *femme fatale* she is blatantly materialistic and does not care on how many people she has to step in order to get what she wants.

Baby is first described in a fragmented way; she consists of bits and pieces that seem to clash with each other. The order in which she is described is “a long suede coat”, “a short shimmery blue dress”, “legs”, “feet” and “bright paint on her face” (53) concluding with “She is like an exotic doll, all her tiny features in immaculate proportion” (54). This fragmented way of describing a woman is reminiscent of traditional love sonnets in which women are also portrayed in an array of perfect body parts and proportions as perceived through the male gaze. Nevertheless, Galgut subverts this discourse also in the sense that the first impression of Baby is in no way harmonious and rather “garish” (54) and repulsive.

While her exterior appears garishly colourful, she also has a certain blankness about her. She seems permanently bored and any probing into her past is deflected by her. All she reveals is that her past was traumatic and her current actions serve to expunge this past. She has now taken control of her destiny and nothing will stop her from reaching her goal. In a sense she disowns her past self. Her new name, Baby, thus also signifies a rebirth and a new canvas on which to sketch herself.

Furthermore the name Baby is not far away from “Barbie”, the American doll that has come to symbolise superficiality, wealth, glamour and success. Ironically, Canning’s first name is Kenneth, making him together with Baby “Barbie and Ken”, the ultimate plastic couple. More than being a bit of tongue in cheek humour, this seems to suggest that Baby and Canning represent a new kind of relationship in South Africa, the biracial yuppie couple thrown together by convenience and driven by a desire for money rather than real love. It is however an unbalanced relationship as Baby exploits Canning’s desire to fit in and to be admired in order to gain access to his money. Adam remarks that Baby “is the power in the relationship. The devotion between them is a one-way affair. ... It’s a marriage that must finally end in shipwreck” (66).

Some of the uncanniness in the novel relates to the doll-like appearance of Baby. Freud in his essay “The Uncanny” discusses Jentsch’s claim that the uncanny emanating from the doll Olympia in E. T. A. Hoffmann’s story “The Sandman” is due to its ability to mimic life so realistically that the observer is “in uncertainty whether a particular figure in the story is a human being or an automaton” (135). Freud, however dismisses Jentsch’s claim of the reader’s intellectual uncertainty about the doll as insufficient to be the main cause of a sense of the uncanny. According to Freud then, the artifice of the doll is not the reason that she is uncanny. In an analysis of the figure of the doll in Rilke, Eva-Maria Simms, however, points out that in psychoanalysis the doll is never fully explored and always “taken for granted as a symbol within the oedipal struggle” (663). Through her exploration of Rilke’s work, Simms explains that while the doll is the unquestioning receptacle of our imagination and “lends itself to an imaginative representation of the human world” (672), it also comes to symbolise the limits of imagination, and therefore death, as the doll can never respond and effectively becomes a lifeless body. Simms says that “[t]he great fear which the doll inspires is the fear of a silence and emptiness at the heart of our existence” and “the possible meaninglessness of our life beyond the fragile clearing of the present” (673). While the doll is on the one hand the idealised and pure image of perfection, it is also a reminder of death once we realise that its lifelike qualities cannot transcend into the world of reality. In *The Impostor* Baby is repeatedly referred to as a doll (54, 80) and portrayed as indifferent and unresponsive. She is physically desirable, but emotionally absent. Both Adam and Canning are hurt and

exasperated by her lack of emotional response. Once the physical act of love-making is over Baby becomes a mere body. She cannot give the men the emotional affirmation they expect of her in the sense that she does not reflect the desire and love they feel for her back to them. Canning thus complains that Baby “[doesn’t] notice[] [him] at all” (106). He says that he “destroyed a happy home to be with her” (106) and that he “gave up a lot to be with Baby” (107). This seems to suggest that Baby is a destroyer of life as reflected in the nuclear family and that beyond her physical attraction there lies an emptiness and meaninglessness that is painful to bear.

As mentioned above, however, Baby not only evokes the classic *femme fatale* and presents to the reader as an uncanny doll-like figure, she also recalls the description of the African warrior woman in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*:

And from right to left along the lighted shore moved a wild and gorgeous apparition of a woman.

She walked with measured steps, draped in striped and fringed cloths, treading the earth proudly with a slight jingle and flash of barbarous ornaments. She carried her head high; her hair was done in the shape of a helmet; she had brass leggings to the knee, brass wire gauntlets to the elbow, a crimson spot on her tawny cheek, innumerable necklaces of glass beads on her neck; bizarre things, charms, gifts of witch-men, that hung about her, glittered and trembled at every step. She must have had the value of several elephant tusks on her. She was savage and superb, wild-eyed and magnificent; ... (Conrad 100-101)

There is a resonance with this description in the first time Adam sees Baby:

... they come around the corner and she is standing on the grass, her back to them. The sun is going down in a spectacular arterial sewage of colour, but she appears indifferent to the display. She seems rapt in some private fantasy, holding a long suede coat closed around her body, despite the heat. She hears them and turns. Under the coat she is wearing a short, shimmery

blue dress, and her legs are very long. Although her feet are bare, it's as if she's wearing high heels. Even before he sees the bright paint on her face, Adam has a flash of the woman on the road outside the town, selling herself. She seems to have been transported here, garish and gorgeous and improbable.

Once that first image fades, he sees past it to how beautiful she is. She is like an exotic doll, all her tiny features in immaculate proportion. (*The Impostor* 53-54)

Comparing the two extracts, it is apparent that the African woman is perceived to be exotic and almost artificial in appearance. But while she is “doll-like” she is frightening because she defies easy classification. Like the warrior woman in *Heart of Darkness*, Baby is both seductive and terrible in that she is beautiful but poses a threat to traditional male hierarchies. Adam first sees her from the legs up and she seems to be elevated, almost towering despite her slowness.

Moreover, in the following passage from *The Impostor*, Adam sees himself as an outsider in an unexplored world, the name “Gondwana”, like Conrad's “prehistoric world” reinforces this impression. In *Heart of Darkness* the narrator relates a sense of being an intruder and of being fascinated and repulsed by the indigenous people at the same time. Adam admits to the same feeling a bit later on in the novel when he is surprised by the black worker while swimming:

It's a horrible moment. His body becomes colder than the water. Centuries of history drop away: the forest itself is staring at him – into him – with a dark face, lined and worn and old, marinated in ancient contempt. The face belongs here. Adam is the intruder, alien and unwanted; the single element in the scene that doesn't fit. All his pagan hymns to the landscape depart, unwritten. (68)

This contradiction between the harmless and innocent and the monstrous is exploited several times in the novel. Baby is described to have green eyes,

something Adam “[ha]s never seen in a black person before” (59). This hints at mixed ancestry and, given the South African context, “miscegenation”. Her eyes thus become a sign for the duality of her character, and for the ambivalence that Adam feels towards her. She is simultaneously beautiful and desirable but also distasteful and repulsive to Adam (54). Furthermore, Adam notes that “one eye is distinctly larger than the other” (59) giving her an unbalanced appearance. Adam concludes that “[t]his tiny imbalance seems to reflect a deeper imbalance in her character” (59). This seems to suggest that her imbalance and unpredictability is inherently inscribed on her body.

On the other hand Baby’s green eyes and long finger nails (54) also give her a catlike appearance. She is thus set up from the beginning as predatory and threatening. This feline demeanour also invites the reader to draw a parallel between Baby and the lion Canning keeps in an enclosure. Like the lion, Baby appears to be a wild creature who doesn’t seem to belong in her domestic environment.

In another instance Baby interrupts Adam and Canning while talking about her and as “[s]he passes across one of the lights on the front *stoep* ... for an instant her body is a dark mass in silhouette, impossible to measure; then she is just a woman again ...” (109 – 110). This imagery in this passage suggests that Baby’s shadow threatens to swallow up the two men in her darkness, that Baby is uncontrollable and fearsome. The body of the woman thus evokes a dark and unfathomable power that threatens to overpower the unwary male. The moment she becomes “just a woman again” (110), Adam notes that “it’s as if they have, in fact, been talking about nothing” (110). Thus, once the woman returns to her fragile, “diminutive and gorgeous” (110) body again she is “nothing” (110).

In contrast to Baby’s monstrosity stands the utter vacuity of white women in the novel. Charmaine, Gavin’s girlfriend, is one such woman. Gavin calls her Babe, and while this is on one level simply a common endearment, the appellation also invites a direct comparison between Baby and Charmaine. Charmaine’s perception of the world around her seems to extend to the merely superficial and the intuitive. She is presented as flakey and superstitious, she speaks of auras and presences and of the house having to be exorcised of its ghosts.

As pointed out in the opening passage of this chapter, Adam and Canning are not only rivals but also doubles. While Canning with his black wife and business partners seems to have embraced the multicultural rainbowism of the new South Africa, Adam questions his motives for doing so. As already mentioned earlier in this chapter, notions of race and identity are complicated and informed by class and gender. I have argued that the race struggle still very apparent in novels like *The Good Doctor* has been overtaken by a class struggle that is mainly economically driven. In his thesis chapter on *The Impostor*, Arseneault argues that Galgut is critical of “the official narrative of rainbowism perpetuated by the promoters of a ‘new’ South Africa” (71). During the launch party for the new golf course Mr Genov gives a speech which is indicative of this kind of discourse as he touts “...is it not good to see so many different people in one room – all different colours, different cultures, everybody mixed ... this really is a new South African Party! ... just a few years ago this would not have been possible ...and this whole venture, our golf estate, is a reflection of this new, multi-cultural spirit ... our partners are a mix of colours and backgrounds, like the faces in this room ...” (159-160). Adam, who observes the party from a balcony above

is briefly caught up in the picture: saris and business suits mingling with African fabrics and Arabic robes. Accents and languages twine companionably together; skins and beads rub agreeably against silk. Even the waiters in their neutral tuxedos, are a harmonious mixture of black and white and brown. It really is like an advertisement for the new country. (159)

While on the surface the gathering might support the idea of an idyllic multicultural South Africa, Arseneault argues that the passage also reveals that this multiculturalism is “intimately connected to the upper echelons of South African society and excludes others” (72). Arseneault further points out that the intermingling of racial signifiers of skin and colour with symbols of wealth such as business suits, beads and silk betrays the capitalist interests that underlie this gathering (72). Adam states that “the impulse to belong is very strong” yet “he remains outside” (159). Adam is aware that since he is only there as a guest of Canning’s he is not really a part of this group of people and “[i]t’s what’s absent, what *isn’t* here in this house,

that Adam feels truly part of, and which makes him afraid" (160). The whole idea of the golf course is one of exclusivity as "membership will be very expensive and limited" (118). Adam sees himself as part of those South Africans who do not have the economic means to join this exclusive club. As Arseneault argues, the golf course "emphasizes the exclusionary nature of this version of multiculturalism with its underlying class politics; membership is purchased with money and social clout and is uninterested in those underprivileged populations outside this façade" (72).

In fact those who have suffered most under the apartheid dispensation, those who are too old to really profit from the new democracy, are the ones who are relegated to the extreme margins of society as neither the new black government, nor the white affluent classes are interested in their predicament. Their presence becomes an embarrassment to both parties as they are a reminder of past and present injustices. This becomes apparent through the figures of the old servant couple at Gondwana in *The Impostor*. They are expelled from their home and lose their only source of income since they threaten to expose Baby and Adam's secret affair. Baby justifies her actions by saying that the old couple "were past their time anyway. ... There's no place for them here anymore" (183).

Horrell argues thus that the "black servant becomes the cipher for perceived and acknowledged injustice" (7). She furthermore argues that "it is through this figure that the narrator returns in order to construct a moment of confession and reparation" (7). In *The Impostor* Adam faces a similar situation when he is confronted with the helplessness of the old servant couple. Although he does come to a moment of realization in which he can acknowledge his guilt as he realizes "what he has been complicit in, what he has not refused" (183), he remains unable to take responsibility for any agency in the couple's misfortune, as he "gives them back" into the care of their son, Lindile. In fact Adam, who admits to being economically "on a par" (194) with Lindile also feels that "although they're on a level for the moment, Lindile is on his way up, Adam on his way down" (194). Adam even surmises that Lindile would prefer "Adam to be far away, in another country entirely" (194). The suggestion here is that there is no place left for the white man in South Africa. The ending of the novel, however, contradicts this idea as Adam quite easily finds a new job in the city and continues his life as before.

In conclusion the analysis of Adam and Canning's relationship reveals that notions of masculinity and whiteness in *The Impostor* are deeply intertwined with notions of class. In a capitalist society like that of post-apartheid South Africa, money is seen to become the primary motivator for the characters' actions. While the official discourse of the country is one of multiculturalism, the reality is that only a few have access to the resources of the land and that the majority of the country's population is still excluded from participating in the gains. Although the position of white men seems to be on the decline, Galgut's narrative suggests that this, too, is mostly an illusion. White men like Canning still wield a considerable amount of power as they hold access to much of the country's natural resources. Throughout the narrative women are presented mostly through a male gaze which portrays them as frightening and corrupt. Baby relies on her sexual power to gain access to Canning's money and shamelessly exploits him in her endeavour to become wealthy.

Chapter 6: “Some kind of dark attending angel”: Doubles and Power in *In A Strange Room*

In a Strange Room, like *The Good Doctor*, has received wide acclaim and was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize. It is therefore surprising how little has been written about the novel academically. The novel consists of three parts: “The Follower”, “The Lover” and “The Guardian”. In the first part, the protagonist, Damon, undertakes an ill fated journey through the mountains of Lesotho with Reiner, a German tourist he had met while travelling through Greece. Damon feels attracted to Reiner, but throughout their journey this attraction remains unspoken. The story thus explores the tension between the two characters, with Damon oscillating between desire and despair as the increasingly dominant Reiner seems to dictate their journey. In the second story Damon meets three Swiss tourists during his journey through Zimbabwe. Once again an unspoken attraction sparks up between Damon and Jerome and once again Damon’s desire is thwarted by his inability to express his love for Jerome. Kostelac points out that “[w]hile an imbalance of power prevents intimacy from developing between Reiner and Damon in the first story, the mutual powerlessness of Damon and Jerome forecloses it in the second.” (166 *Critical Reception*) In the third and final story Damon travels to India with his friend Anna. Anna is, however, severely ill as she suffers from bipolar disorder. In the course of the story Anna’s psyche unravels more and more culminating in a suicide attempt that lands her in hospital. Damon now finds himself in the position of guardian for Anna as he attempts to navigate the difficult hospital system in India. Therefore, while Damon navigates the difficulties of loneliness resulting from thwarted desire in the first two stories, he now has to navigate the loneliness “stemming this time from the loss of an established connection with someone he loves and esteems.” (Kostelac *Critical Reception* 187)

Skidelsky claims that the novel is a “work poised between memoir and fiction” (*Tale of Ill-fated Journeys*). Skidelsky also says that the use of the personal pronoun “I” lets us believe that we are listening to the authorial voice and that the narrative therefore is a memoir. Furthermore, Jacobs argues that by naming the protagonist Damon, which is also the first name of the author, the impression of reading a

memoir is further cemented (104). However, Galgut consistently destabilizes this narrative perspective by changing to a third person point of view (sometimes within the same paragraph). Jacobs points out that this locates the narrative “in the space of crossing between actual author, implied author, narrator and subject/protagonist, thereby inviting a reading of events in terms of both autobiography and fiction” (104). Kostelac maintains that “[t]he destabilization of narrative perspective creates an impression of the variegated and often irreconcilable facets of the self” (*Critical reception* 32). Folkenflick (in Oster 65) says that autobiography serves as a mirror to the writer. He claims that the autobiography acts “as a mirror stage in life, an extended moment that enables one to reflect on oneself by presenting an image of the self for contemplation.” The constant change and slipping between first person and third person narrator thus seems to suggest that the past self is both the present self and a fictional self that is reconstructed in the text. Benveniste (in Oster 66) points out that unlike third person pronouns or nouns which have “objective referents” “each / has its own reference and corresponds each time to a unique being, who is set up as such ... It is solely a 'reality of discourse' ... / signifies 'the person who is uttering the present instance of discourse containing /'”. Oster thus concludes that the “I” is always “active, constructing, immediate”. As the “I” is both the referent and the referee in “the discourse it constructs” it is therefore “always already 'double'.” (66) Identity is thus ephemeral. It furthermore points to the idea that identity is always under construction and that “rather than being 'always already' constructed, I am always still in process” (Oster 67). In the narrative Damon therefore finds himself confronted with different versions of himself; his present self and his reconstructed self. The figure of the double thus functions differently in this novel than in the other works I have explored. While there is doubling of the characters too, the most important double in *In a Strange Room* is the one between author, character and the reconstructed self.

As the title of the novel also implies, this is a story about alienation and isolation. More than that, it also suggests a sense of the uncanny, the German “Unheimliche”. As Freud maintains in his essay on the uncanny, the uncanny is a sense of feeling unhomely or frightened within the familiar as he says: “The uncanny (*das Unheimliche*, ‘the unhomely’) is in some way a species of the familiar (*das Heimliche*, ‘the homely’) (134). The sense of the unhomely in Galgut’s narrative is highlighted

by the fact that the protagonist/narrator is constantly travelling and is literally and figuratively homeless. Travel and the crossing of borders in the novel functions as a mirror that is held up to the protagonist each time he finds himself yet again in another unhomely environment and he is faced time after time with the task of negotiating an identity within this setting and vis à vis the people he meets. As Kostelac points out “travel, the crossing of literal borders, quite literally enables narrative, the crossing of figurative borders, and the distance from familiar climes is figured as a precondition for a confrontation with the strange disavowed aspects of the self” (*Critical Reception* 59). Similarly Freud argues that the uncanny arises from the fact that something familiar has “been repressed and then reappears” (152). Travel thus causes the narrator to face up to these repressed aspects of himself.

Each one of the three stories that make up the novel brings into focus a relationship at which the protagonist has failed. In the end the relationship with that person acts as a mirror of the internal state of isolation the author finds himself in. The past in this way also becomes a reflection of the present. And as discussed above, the “I” of the narrator is constructed in the past, but also in the present as the story is told.

In this chapter I will therefore focus on how Galgut has used the travel narrative and memoir to present the reader with a number of uncanny experiences that form the core of the narrator’s identity. I will discuss how the narrator each time fails to connect with the people he meets, and thinks he could love, and how this failure comes to define his life. The last story in the trilogy, “The Guardian”, is especially interesting as it is one of only a few of Galgut’s stories that centres on a woman. However, while it might seem to be a sympathetic representation of a woman at first (similar to Ellen in *The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs*) it soon becomes clear that Galgut has a deep mistrust of women as they are ultimately portrayed as inherently unstable and deceptive.

The Follower

In The first part of the novel, “The Follower”, the young Damon finds himself travelling through Greece, aimlessly drifting from one place to another. Describing the feeling this causes he says:

“Life becomes a series of tiny threatening details, he feels no connection with anything around him, he’s constantly afraid of dying. As a result he is hardly ever happy in the place where he is, something in him is already moving forwards to the next place, and yet he is also never going towards something, but always away, away. This is a defect in his nature that travel has turned into a condition.”

When he meets Reiner, Damon recognizes himself, he feels Reiner to be “familiar” (5) and mistakenly believes that they might have something in common. The very first description we get of Reiner, who is clad entirely in black, already alerts the reader to the fact that this is indeed Damon’s shadow, his darker self or “some kind of dark attending angel” (23) as Damon later calls him. Jacobs says that while Reiner and Damon may be mirror images of each other “like original and reflection, their images are also opposed” (105). This suggests that they will discover throughout their journey together that what they first thought binds them together is actually that which later leads to their relationship failing, as they are both incapable of expressing their desire for each other and the “push and pull” of power leads to an ever more abusive relationship. It is as Damon himself says: “An image in a mirror is a reversal, the reflection and the original are joined but might cancel each other out.” (41)

Damon invites Reiner to visit him in South Africa and when Reiner arrives they plan a long hiking trip through Lesotho. From the beginning the relationship is unbalanced and Damon admits that “[i]t feels as if they have agreed to something more than this practical arrangement, but what isn’t exactly clear” (7). Because they mistakenly believe each other to be the same and “thought of real communication as unnecessary” (41), boundaries are never set and Damon finds himself going along with the demands of the German although he feels uncomfortable with them. It is Reiner who decides how far and how long they walk each day, it is Reiner who decides what and when they eat.

Clearly Reiner is in a power position as he is the one who controls both the money and the planning of the itinerary. Damon feels that without Reiner he would not have gone on this journey and that his being there at all makes him “subservient to the

other, who pulls him along in his wake as if on thin threads of power” (31). This seems to imply that Damon feels indebted to Reiner somehow, simply because he has shown an interest in him. Damon has in fact made himself vulnerable early on in the relationship, when they met in Greece and he “offer[ed] himself” (12) on the mountain in Mycenae. Reiner, who is aware of this offering, abuses the sense of power he has gained from Damon’s expression of desire and his willingness to submit to him.

In the end their relationship takes on a sadistic character as Reiner pushes Damon to go on more and more demanding hikes and at the same time does less and less of the tasks required in maintaining a normal life (such as setting up or clearing away the camp). In fact the “wifely duties” of doing the dishes and preparing the food fall to Damon, while Reiner becomes more and more absorbed in his own vanity and the ritualistic maintenance of his appearance. This implies that Damon becomes further and further emasculated by Reiner. Not only is he physically weaker but he also takes on the responsibility for the “home sphere” which relegates him to a feminine role. Furthermore, Reiner controls the money and purposely uses this to make Damon feel dependent and small. In this sense Damon is further emasculated as his financial dependency on Reiner mirrors that of a housewife who too is dependent on the money she receives from her husband. The humiliation of having to ask for money comes to represent the humiliation of the withholding of love by Reiner as Damon says: “Money is never just money alone, it is a symbol for other deeper things, on this trip how much you have is a sign of how loved you are, Reiner hoards the love, he dispenses it as a favour, I am endlessly gnawed by the absence of love, to be loveless is to be without power.” (42) It is thus clear that Damon’s need for love is the German’s source of power.

In a way the relationship between Damon and Reiner also seems to be coded as a metaphor of colonial conquest. Reiner’s attitude towards the country they travel through is decidedly colonial. Damon notes that for Reiner “this country is only a concept, some abstract idea that can be subjugated to the will” (25) and Reiner “mark[s] [their journey] out in coloured ink on his map” (34) without regard for the terrain or the people who live there. Reiner claims not to believe in countries and dismisses history as insignificant. The failure to recognize that people and nations

have been shaped by history seems to echo Lawrence's dismissal of history in *The Good Doctor*. All that matters to him is to conquer a certain distance in the day and by overcoming great obstacles to show that he is stronger than nature. In *The Will to Power* Nietzsche presupposes that all humans attempt to impose their will on others. Every action towards another individual stems from the desire to subjugate that person to one's will. Even a seemingly altruistic act is driven by the need for power as altruism elicits obligation and obligation puts one under the power of the other. Thus all human actions are ultimately driven by egotism and the need for power. Reiner represents this form of will to power as he subjugates both Damon and the world around him to his will. (Travis J. Denneson "Society and the Individual in Nietzsche's *The Will to Power*") The pain, both physical and emotional, he causes in the process is merely "interesting" (25) to him and he examines it like a scientific specimen, detached and unaffected. Damon notes that "[i]f your own pain is interesting to you, how much more detached will you be from somebody else's pain, and it's true that there is something in Reiner that looks at all human failings with dispassion, maybe even with disdain" (25). Furthermore, while Reiner is happy to take up Damon's invitation to visit him in South Africa, he is unwilling to give him the respect and love Damon expects in return. It thus seems that in the same way that colonized people were not given the respect they deserved by their colonial masters, Damon is robbed of his dignity by literally having to beg for love.

The Lover

In the second part of the novel, called "The Lover", travel becomes a metaphor of "lovelessness". The narrator feels disconnected from the world and his ceaseless travel serves as an escape from this sense of disconnectedness, while at the same time being an expression of this disconnectedness. The narrator admits that travel is "like a mirror in which he sees himself. Not his face, or his past, but who he is" (118). He thus recognizes that his travelling is not fuelled by curiosity for the strange or the unknown but is a sort of running away from the emptiness of his own life. The "strange rooms" he stays in are thus a reflection of his alienation and isolation. Damon realises that what gives life value and what makes a place significant is love, as he says: "Without love nothing has value, nothing can be made to matter very much" (67). He thus feels that if he had somebody to love and be loved by, his life

(as well as his travels) would take on meaning and he could connect with the world around him. When he meets Jerome during his journey through Mozambique, Damon senses that he could offer him the love and connection he craves. But although they travel together for a long time their journey with all its frustrating obstacles and deferred border crossings comes to symbolize their inability to communicate and connect. It is not only a matter of language, but also an inability in both of them to admit to and act on their desire for each other. In the end death steals all hope of them ever connecting, as Jerome dies in a motorcycle accident. Damon describes their failed relationship as “the story of what never happened, the story of travelling a long way while standing still” (111).

As Kostelac points out, the South African context is deprioritized throughout the novel (*Authorship* 58). Unlike Galgut’s other novels, where the South African context is absolutely defining for the protagonist, being South African in *In a Strange Room* only constitutes one part of the narrator’s identity and the novel instead works out “problems of subjectivity and authorship in relation to strange, foreign locales” (Kostelac *Authorship* 58). The travel motif highlights the narrator’s status as an outsider and as Kostelac claims “part of a privileged minority in South Africa” (*Authorship* 58). Damon, the narrator, in contrast to the European and American travellers, is seen to have a special insight into the position of the African people in the countries he visits as he becomes aware of the exploitation and poverty these people suffer. Damon perceives the other travellers as egotistic and ignorant when they fail to see the role they play in perpetuating the exploitation of the African people. This seems to be a stringent critique of European and American neo-colonialism, in which the developing nations are seen as either exotic travel locations or as weak in will as they are not able to uplift themselves. When the narrator notes that “[t]he shortcomings and the squalor of the continent have let them [the tourists] down personally, it never seems to occur to them that the conditions they found horrible and disgusting are not part of a set that will be struck when they have gone offstage”, Galgut expresses what it is like to be judged and found wanting by these travellers all the time.

However, Damon realizes that by virtue of his privileged position as a white South African he is not too far removed from these travellers himself as he says: “He is as

guilty as any of them, he too is passing through, he too has luck and money, all his self-righteousness will not absolve him" (79). This raises yet another identity conflict for the narrator as he feels that although he is trying to connect with the other travellers he is perceived as "a fucked-up South African" (77) by them when he points out their selfishness to them. In a way he serves as a mirror to them as like them he is European by descent, but he also symbolises what European domination has done to the African people and they find it uncomfortable being confronted with their own unpleasant history. As a white South African Damon thus is both an insider, by virtue of being African, and an outsider by virtue of his whiteness. This is also a conflict that is acutely felt by Adam in *The Impostor* when he finds that he has nothing in common with either the white inhabitants of the town or the black inhabitants in the township or the Nuwe Hoop village. Travel in *In a Strange Room* highlights this conflicted position of the white South African as the protagonist becomes aware of his own position vis à vis other African countries and people. In the end the narrator realizes that travel will not allow him to escape his own South Africanness as it "resides, ultimately, in his own ravaged psyche" (Russo) as he says: "The border is a line on a map, but also drawn inside himself somewhere" (86).

The Guardian

In the third part of the novel, "The Guardian", Damon takes his friend, Anna, who suffers from bipolar disorder, along on a trip to India. The trip is meant to distract Anna from her inner turmoil and allow her to regain her equilibrium. Damon is thus her guardian and chaperone. Things, however, go horribly wrong, as Anna uses the trip to escape the control and care of her lover and parents at home, who have already had her admitted to a clinic once.

Damon describes himself and Anna as having "a good friendship, she is like a sister to him, somebody he loves and who makes him laugh. Somebody he wants to protect". (131) However during their journey Anna becomes more and more strange to him as she escapes his control and Damon remarks that "they're playing by a new set of rules" (131). Even before they arrive in India, Damon realizes that he is not really able to control Anna as the force of her illness is stronger than any bond of friendship. It is as if "something in her has come loose from the moorings and is

sliding around inside her” (128) and “her chaos has leaked out somehow and touched the physical world, throwing people and objects into disarray” (140). Damon also comes to realise that he has no real power over Anna as he says “If he tries to exert his authority and she refuses to obey, well, what could he do about that. If she walks out the door with her bag, telling him to get lost, he would have no recourse but to plead. Then they might both see where the power lies.” (136) In a way Anna is often represented like a child testing the limits of her guardian. Her transgressions thus escalate as she becomes aware of the powerlessness of Damon. It is telling however, that although Anna has been diagnosed by a psychiatrist, both Damon and Anna’s lover “regard [this] with suspicion” (127). Although this is done with the idea that they do not want to label Anna as deficient, it also points to the idea that Anna herself is not really ill and that sufficient willpower will enable her to be “normal”. Thus Anna’s subsequent suicide attempt, and eventual suicide, are seen as unforgivable. Damon sees Anna’s suicide very much as a betrayal as he says “[t]here is no desire to punish her, any more than a means to forgive her, what happened has put that beyond that.” (177) Contrary to Patrick’s breakdown in *The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs*, mental breakdown in a woman is thus not acceptable.

From the beginning Anna’s disorder is characterized as sexual deviancy. She is for example seen to “fetishize[] in her photographs, many of them pictures of herself naked, all her wounds” (129) and for Anna her psychotic episode is “sexy in her mind” (129). However, her deviancy is not only confined to her display of self-inflicted mutilation but it is also ascribed to her entering into a heterosexual relationship while she is actually a lesbian and has a lover back at home. Her new lover, the French Jean, is described as a “sad-looking cadaverous man” (134). The adjective “cadaverous” associates Jean with putrefaction and contamination and thus the relationship with this man seems to be a predicator of Anna’s eventual death. Jean treats Anna’s illness “as a bad drama that has been foisted on her by manipulative people” (135) and also “feed[s] her hash and cocaine and huge amounts of alcohol” (135). In fact it is Jean’s bad influence that completely derails Anna and leads to her taking an overdose of sleeping pills.

Cheryl Stobie argues that in *In a Strange Room*, the “bisexual characters represent excess, an inability to commit, insatiability and psychological instability” (485).

Furthermore, Stobie claims, that they also “represent the incommensurability and uncontrollability of bodies or states ... which have the ability to change, rather than being comfortingly stable” (485). If we look at Galgut’s other novels, it is clear that this is a critique that applies to women more than anyone else. Ellen, in *The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs*, is represented in a manner similar to Anna. What is most reprehensible about her, we are told, is her changeability and her inability to remain stable in the eyes of the narrator. Ellen’s sense of loss, although similar to the sense of rootlessness Damon feels, is represented as something that leads to sexual excess and unpredictability and her floating around in the search of a sense for life is ultimately seen as laughable and pointless.

Anna is said to “have always been on the same side” (131) as Damon and her lover, but as her illness progresses and spirals more and more out of control, Damon feels she “has changed allegiances” (131). The greatest betrayal for Damon comes when he finds out that she had planned her suicide all along and that in fact she used the trip to escape control from home. He states that Anna, “even in her sanest moments” (165) has worked towards achieving her suicidal goal. That the narrator refers to “her sanest moments” seems to indicate that the illness itself is not the cause for Anna’s defect, but that it is something in her nature that drives her towards self-destruction. Anna is thus portrayed as being “in league with the dark stranger inside her, the one who wants her dead” (159).

During his battle to keep Anna alive in a hospital in India, Damon heavily relies on the help of an English tourist (who coincidentally used to be a nurse). In their interactions it becomes clear to him though that Anna’s affliction has set something loose in the other woman as well and that she feels “he’s in some way a solution to her troubles” (174). Although he needs Caroline (the other woman) he shrinks from the expectation that he will have to pay back the favour in some way. He feels that they have not chosen to be friends, but that the circumstances have brought them together and he is loath to take on her burden and he says: “...this makes for a fraught and uneasy alliance, he feels he owes her a debt and at the same time resents the obligation” (174). This unwanted obligation mirrors the first part of the novel in the sense that as with Reiner Damon has had to depend on the kindness and help of another. Galgut seems to imply that we have a moral obligation to repay

kindness to other people but at the same time obligation implies some sort of loss of power. This again recalls Nietzsche's *Will to Power* in the sense that real altruism is not possible. Any act of kindness is an attempt to bring the other under one's power as kindness obligates one into gratitude. (Travis J. Denneson "Society and the Individual in Nietzsche's *The Will to Power*")

Emotionally, Damon is not able to give Caroline the support and consolation she expects from him and he is badly affected by her story about the loss of her husband. Thus Caroline's story "travels into him, his skin is very thin, there is no barrier between him and the world, he takes it all in" (175). Caroline's grief from long ago is like a mirror to his own grief at the inability to protect his friend from self-destruction. In this way, Caroline's story becomes part of Anna's story and Damon can no longer separate Caroline's grief from his own. This seems to suggest that past and present stories, and by extension experiences, cannot be kept separate. There is a constant dialogue as they overlap and flow into each other. The same applies to people and Damon says: "Lives leak into each other, the past lays claim to the present." Arguably this is also the way Galgut wants us to understand his novels. They are of course each one works on their own that stand separately, but ultimately they are in dialogue with all that has gone before and with all that is still to come.

To conclude, in his novel *In a Strange Room*, Galgut has used both the memoir and the travel narrative to show how his protagonist has to negotiate identity in a variety of strange and unfamiliar settings. By using a narrative technique that slips from first person to third person Galgut has shown that memory is unreliable and that identity is in fact always unstable and constructs itself anew every time the story is told. Stories themselves become contaminated by other stories and experience and memory fuse together as "lives leak into each other". Travel and border crossings have been used in the narrative to foreground the narrator's own insecurity in the face of his South Africanness and his inability to connect with other people and the world around him. Throughout the novel, the people the narrator meets serve as mirrors or opposites to him that let him realize in the end that he cannot escape who he is and that he has to face his own vulnerability and sense of loss in order to connect with the world around him.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Galgut's novels are first and foremost novels about men. In the five novels discussed in this thesis Galgut presents us with male characters that struggle to conform to mainstream or hegemonic masculinity. Masculinity for these characters is fraught with conflict and ambiguity as they try to find an identity that is morally and ethically acceptable. Patriarchy and masculinism were clearly enshrined within the apartheid doctrine and with the dismantling of the system also came a dismantling of gender norms and configurations. As Walker points out this has resulted in a crisis of masculinity for many South African men in the sense that male power is no longer automatic and new gender relations have to be negotiated (163).

In *The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs* Galgut presents us with a narrative that explores the wounds inflicted on the psyche of men by apartheid. Through the protagonist, Patrick, various ideals of masculinity and their ethical implications are investigated. Patrick finds himself heavily scarred by the hegemonic apartheid masculinity as portrayed by his father, brother and the army. After a complete mental breakdown he searches for a way to distance himself from that kind of punitive masculinity and to occupy an ethically acceptable position within his political and social environment. Through Godfrey Patrick is introduced to political activism and this seems to open up the possibility for a redeeming masculinity for Patrick. However Godfrey in his masculinity is not so far removed from Patrick's misogynistic father as he too is seen to abuse women and engage in macho behaviour. In Lovell Patrick sees a man that he could imagine becoming as he presents a white masculinity that renounces the politics of apartheid and campaigns for a more egalitarian system. However Patrick cannot find redemption in politics alone as he realises that he has to come to terms with his homosexuality and what that means for him as a man in South Africa. Thus at the end of the novel we see Patrick breaking with all the men around him and embarking on a journey of self-discovery.

Ellen in *The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs* presents us with a rare female figure in Galgut's fiction. However, while at first Galgut seems to portray Ellen in a positive and sympathetic light, it soon becomes clear that she is narcissistic and lacks insight

into her own position as a woman. She is represented as fickle, unstable and ultimately a plaything for the men she encounters. Thus Galgut does not allow Ellen a redeeming position within the new South Africa as she is seen to lack self-awareness since she takes up with a man that represents all the old values of apartheid masculinity in the end.

The Quarry is an experimental novel that deprives the reader of the comfort of realist narrative fiction. Characters are stereotypes rather than fully fleshed out characters. Nevertheless through elements of the carnivalesque and the absurd, Galgut comments on the state of South Africa during and shortly after apartheid. Galgut constantly refuses to give symbols their expected or “rightful” meaning thereby showing his disillusionment and feelings of alienation. In the end he seems to offer us a view of a world that has lost meaning.

With *The Good Doctor* Galgut set out to write “a new South African book” (Miller 142) that explores what it means to be a man in contemporary South Africa. Frank is a man who has been deeply affected and scarred by apartheid as he was forced into an act that betrayed all his values as a doctor and human being when he was forced into complicity in the torture of a young SWAPO soldier. Laurence is in many ways Frank’s alter ego and represents a new masculinity that is no longer held back by the apartheid past. As Frank’s double Laurence forces Frank to confront his past and to move from a position of apathy to a more active and constructive position. However, the masculinity as portrayed by Laurence, is by no means unproblematic. Laurence’s naïve disavowal of history and his lack of feeling for established hierarchies frequently land him in trouble.

Nevertheless Laurence offers Frank a world in which intimacy and tenderness amongst men is possible. Frank, however, rejects this possibility and retreats into machismo in order to hide his vulnerability. His relationships with women are meaningless and essentially devoid of any true emotion. In fact Frank denies Maria any humanity by paying her for sex and reducing their encounters to “transactions, the limits of which [are] practical” (58).

Laurence's disappearance forces Frank to face up to his own stasis and in the end Frank comes to see them as "two strands in a rope" intertwined and inseparable. This seems to indicate that Frank acknowledges Laurence as a legitimate agent within the new South Africa. While not transformed, Frank nevertheless has insight into his position as a man and attempts to negotiate an ethical way of being for himself.

The analysis of Adam and Canning's relationship in *The Impostor* reveals that notions of masculinity and whiteness intersect with notions of class. In a capitalist society like that of post-apartheid South Africa, money is seen to become the primary motivator for the characters' actions. Adam feels disempowered as a white man mainly because of his lack of financial and political clout. This would suggest that white men in South Africa are under threat. However, this is also revealed to be an illusion. Through their access to a large part of the country's natural resources men such as Canning still wield a considerable amount of power.

Baby too is represented as materialistic, exploitative and corrupt. She is frightening in her coldness and lack of empathy for those less fortunate. Furthermore she embodies the classic femme fatale in her use of sex to gain access to and exploit the weaknesses of men. Unlike the classic femme fatale, however, Baby is not punished for her acts. She thus represents a frightening picture of black female power.

In A Strange Room is a slight departure from the politicised topics of the other three novels discussed. Rather than exploring identity in a South African context this novel takes us outside the borders of South Africa. Through his travels the narrator is confronted with his sense of rootlessness and alienation from the world around him. Rather than exploring the axes of power that emanate from a political system or the state Galgut explores how power is constructed and maintained between individuals.

Galgut does not offer us any ready answers. Rather than seeking answers his novels raise questions about South African identity and ethics. The men in the novels are often self-serving and egotistic and do not offer any clear cut morality. It would almost seem as if Galgut is saying that there is no unambiguous way of being. To be

South African is to be faced by contradictions and conflict. And it is this very moral ambiguity that has come to define South Africanness.

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